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"Baseball and race relations in Boston in the early 1970s are the backdrop for this lively portrait of two unlikely seventh-grade pals, Boston native Richard Riley Moncrief and Napoleon Charlie Ellis, newly arrived from the Dominican Republic. Richard's family is white and working class; Napoleon's father is an elegant professor of Caribbean literature. The boys become friends [and] Richard, who lives and breathes baseball, tries to interest Napoleon, an excellent cricket player, in the beauty and thrill of the game. In a gut-wrenching climax, racial tensions at school destroy their friendship. Lynch captures the thrill of the game with freshness and joy and issues of race and class are introduced with sensitivity and realism. This is a wonderful baseball book, but it's the awkward, intense friendship that drives the story." — Highlighted review / ALA Booklist

“This novel contains some of the best sports writing readers will ever find in a YA novel.” — School Library Journal

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* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.

R Recommended.

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

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

NR Not recommended.

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

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

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Cover illustration by E. B. Lewis from The Other Side ©2001. Used by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.
The Other Side
by Jacqueline Woodson; illustrated by E. B. Lewis

Books about race and race relations, whether well-written or not, are books that carry tremendous historical and political baggage, and they are nearly guaranteed to provoke strong emotions of one kind or another. The topic of racism is difficult to serve up in palatable portions for younger listeners and readers, who have limited ability to provide their own context. Informed by the adult perspective of the writer, these books tend toward over-explanation in an effort to provide that context; they are often message-driven, with neat conclusions and the assumption of simpler, happier futures. Oversimplification of complex issues is a charge often leveled at picture books dealing with weighty subjects; it is a charge that cannot be leveled at Jacqueline Woodson’s latest book.

The title of Woodson’s evocation of a not-so-long ago summer refers to a seemingly impassable division: “That summer the fence that stretched through our town seemed bigger. We lived in a yellow house on one side of it. White people lived on the other.” Clover, an African-American girl about eight or nine years old, relates the story of the “summer there was a girl who wore a pink sweater,” a white girl, on the other side of the fence. After weeks of watching one another, the two girls finally speak, and, with the pragmatism of children, find a way around their mothers’ injunction that they stay on their own side: “‘A fence like this is made for sitting on,’ Annie said. She looked at me sideways. ‘My mama says I shouldn’t go on the other side,’ I said. ‘My mama says the same thing. But she never said nothing about sitting on it.’ ‘Neither did mine,’ I said. That summer me and Annie sat together on that fence.” Woodson is a writer of exceptional integrity, and this short story contains the same emotional and moral complexity found in the author’s longer work (Miracle’s Boys, BCCB 5/00; If You Come Softly, BCCB 10/98) distilled into a minimalist yet poignant readaloud. Clover tells the story that she knows, the story of that particular summer and that particular fence, from her particular point of view. It is this specificity that makes the tale so effective and that sets the unstated context into bold relief.

Lewis’ watercolors provide a telling backdrop to the action; the rural setting is suggested more than delineated, and the gentle softness of the summer light helps model both landscape and characters. Perspective and the placement of characters in the compositions physically establishes the distance between the two girls, each on her own side of the fence. The body language of the children is also telling. In one spread, Clover’s friends jump rope near the fence where Annie watches. Annie, asking to play, leans hopefully over the rails; Sandra, refusing Annie’s request, stands adamant with hand on hip. Eventually, the girls all jump rope together; the spread depicting the six of them balanced on the top rail of the fence visually foreshadows the final text: “When we were too tired to jump anymore, we sat up on the fence, all of us in a long line. ‘Someday somebody’s going
to come along and knock this old fence down,' Annie said. And I nodded. 'Yeah,' I said. 'Someday.'"

This is an emotionally intricate tale presented simply and intimately, and the open-ended conclusion unselfconsciously encourages discussion, examination, and inquiry. Unlike authors of other picture books dealing with racism and prejudice, Woodson doesn't overexplain or stack the emotional deck. She doesn't knock the fence down for the reader/listener; the town does not suddenly have a collective change of heart. She just lets Clover tell the story, and then she leaves it up to readers and listeners to resolve any questions that remain. (Imprint information appears on p. 242.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ALTMAN, JOYCE  Lunch at the Zoo: What Zoo Animals Eat and Why; illus. by Rick Chrustowski and with photographs. Holt, 2001 88p ISBN 0-8050-6070-7 $16.00 R Gr. 4-7

Zoo visitors may spend more time looking at food dishes and less at the animals after encountering this amiable introduction to zoo nutrition. Material covered ranges from the problems of feeding live animals to live animals, the challenge of handing food over to poisonous snakes, the logistics of providing a diet for hundreds of different animals with hundreds of different kinds of appetites, and the role of food in daily stimulation for the animals. The information tends to be livelier than the text (and many of the illustrations), and organization seems a bit haphazard, but the subject is sufficiently novel and intriguing to compensate. Black-and-white photographs add personality as well as information (the tiny bird-of-paradise chick, reaching skyward for a bit of food dangling from a manmade beaklike tool, is a good example). There are a lot of tasty informational tidbits here that will intrigue animal lovers of all sorts; you could also make a daring connection with Solheim's It's Disgusting—and We Ate It! (BCCB 4/98). Nutritional charts and an index are included. DS


Various nocturnal creatures discuss the true nature of the moon: the fox says it's a rabbit, the moth says it's a cocoon, the mouse says it's a seed, the frog says it's a lily pad, and so on. They agree to let the Man of Science solve things, but none of them like his unimaginative and limiting answer. This is a prettily written text, with reliance on poetic echoes in the prose; it's not, unfortunately, much more than that, as the poesy becomes strained and fey and the plot somewhat forced (why does the Man of Science's different view trouble them more than their own
divergence, and where did they find such an atypically dogmatic Man of Science?.
The art too is dreamily pretty, with acrylic wash dappling the surfaces in fresco-like textures while the moon, a multitude of stars, and a few eyecatching planets decorate the pages; the illustrations sometimes sacrifice energy for rhapsody, however, with images that have a static calendar-art look. The lean and questing animals have an elegant if distanced allure, though, and the nocturnal world is ripe for fantasy. This isn’t up to moon picture books such as Yolen’s *Owl Moon* (BCCB 1/88), but it’s a glamorous nighttime vision that many adults and some children may find enticing.

**ARKIN, ALAN** *Cassie Loves Beethoven;* illus. by Hala Wittwer. Hyperion, 2000 188p
Library ed. ISBN 0-7868-2489-1 $17.49
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7868-0564-1 $16.99 Ad Gr. 5-8

Hallie and David convince their father that what their little farm needs is a cow, so they go out and buy one—Cassie, “a fine milker.” But Cassie stops giving milk on arrival, and David seeks advice from Vivian Keats (an eccentric wise woman no one but David takes seriously), who recommends music. Upon hearing Beethoven’s *Pastorale,* not only does Cassie give milk, she talks—and she learns to play the piano so well she debuts with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Bad reviews send her into seclusion, but in the end she is tempted back to the piano by her passion for music, and her playing inspires a would-be-composer swine from next door. The light whimsy necessary to make this sort of premise fly is unfortunately missing from this domestic fantasy; the momentum is unsustained and the willing suspension of disbelief sways under the labored details of Cassie’s technique. Both magic and logic are needed to make fantasy succeed, and this title balances uneasily between the two. Readers may be caught by the strong characterizations of major and minor players, however (Cassie herself is thoroughly obnoxious in her single-minded quest for musical nirvana), and they may deem Cassie, “the Classical Cow,” worth a giggle. JMD

**BANG, MOLLY** *Nobody Particular: One Woman’s Fight to Save the Bays;* written and illus. by Molly Bang. Holt, 2001 47p
ISBN 0-8050-5396-4 $18.00 Ad Gr. 5-8

In 1989, Diane Wilson, a Texas shrimper, became an environmental activist and a thorn in the side of the Formosa Plastics company, badgering Formosa and the EPA for a zero discharge agreement that could help clean the east Texas bay system and preserve the local fishing industry. Bang’s account, as “narrated” by Wilson, is both an impassioned indictment of industrial polluters and an amalgam of mini-lessons in ecology which vie for space in a cluttered layout. Wilson’s story, which spans two continents and involves a large cast of players, is related in the black and white frames of a graphic novel, with minuscule cartoon silhouettes occasionally conversing outside the box. The history of the bay ecosystem is splayed across the spreads as a colored backdrop, with thready hand-lettered text that makes data vital to understanding Wilson’s battle an exhausting chore to read. The author has overloaded her plate with tidbits of a frustratingly complex environmental/social/legal dilemma, and there’s simply too much here for readers to digest in one picture-book sitting. Bang concludes with a fine-print update of Wilson’s story (magnifying glass not included). EB
Baskin, Nora Raleigh  What Every Girl (Except Me) Knows.  Little, 2001  [224p]
ISBN 0-316-07021-1  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 4-7

Twelve-year-old Gabby feels like she’s speeding into womanhood without a map, since her mother died when she was small and there’s only her older brother and father at home. She’s convinced that girls with mothers have knowledge to which she’s not privy, and one of the benefits of her friendship with new girl Taylor is a helpful dose of female camaraderie (as well as some indication that having a mother doesn’t solve everything). Her hunger for mothering means that she’s thrilled about her father’s engagement to lively Cleo, who seems willing to step into the maternal role; when Cleo breaks the engagement, Gabby’s grief sends her in search of the truth about her mother’s death. Baskin deftly manages to validate Gabby’s loneliness while also implying that her self-conscious awkwardness is common to her age group. Relationships are a strong suit here: the book’s depiction of Gabby’s family dynamics, with nice people unintentionally hurting one another with their tacit pledge of silence about the past, is perceptive and sympathetic. Cleo is a charming but not overidealized breath of fresh air (she becomes Gabby’s heroine by immediately understanding the unwearability of the winter coat that makes Gabby into the “olive drab marshmallow girl, Iditarod contender”), and Gabby and Taylor’s friendship, with catchphrases carefully cultivated but the bond underneath genuine, is absolutely authentic. Even readers with a full complement of parents will empathize with Gabby’s desire for a little assistance on the path to adulthood. DS

Beaverson, Aiden  The Hidden Arrow of Maether.  Delacorte, 2000  177p
ISBN 0-385-32750-1  $14.95  R  Gr. 6-10

Linnet’s beloved father died when she was small, and her passive mother married a cruel replacement, Domm, who is a Ranite, a worshipper of the demon Rane. Linnet’s own father raised her as a Truen, a follower of the demon Rane. Linnet’s own father raised her as a Truen, a follower of the old religion of the land of Maether, and from him she inherited a sacred Lysetome, a book of Truen beliefs and traditions. When Domm announces that he has betrothed fifteen-year-old Linnet to a Ranite, she runs away from home. Throughout her journey, she receives magical assistance, from the small tugging in her midsection that leads her forward to the parting of grasses in the direction she should walk. Her adventures include stowing away on a ship and being rescued from the sea; finally, she meets Thom, one of the magical lysefolk, who takes her to the sacred City of Trees described in the Lysetome. After a series of tests, it is determined that Linnet has powers against the demon Rane that are desperately needed to save the waning power of the lysefolk. Beaverson’s writing is suspenseful and well paced and, although there are moments of heavy-handed dialogue, the complex plot elements are deftly woven to create a vivid sense of place and purpose. Fans of fantasy as well as fans of likable young heroines will enjoy the story of Linnet’s quest. KM

Bennett, James W.  Plunking Reggie Jackson.  Simon, 2001  [208p]
ISBN 0-689-83137-4  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 10-12

With a flood of scholarship offers coming in, and major-league scouts up in the bleachers, pitcher Coley Burke should be soaring through the last term of his se-
fessor year. It’s not that easy, though: pressure from his fanatical father (who has installed a life-size statue of Reggie Jackson in the backyard) never lets up, Coley’s grades are hanging by a thread, and his adoring, sexually accommodating girlfriend Bree admits she’s being beaten by her stepfather. Then it gets worse: Coley is suspended from playoffs for a falling grade, the family’s suppressed guilt over the death of their older son explodes, Bree confides she was sexually assaulted by her natural father before her mother’s remarriage to the abusive stepfather, and finally Bree announces she’s pregnant. This is as much soap opera as sports story, with the Burkes’ affluence serving as a handy catalyst for Coley’s trips to Florida, with underage teens-on-the-run renting cars and motel rooms while evading detection, and with stock plotlines pumped dry for dramatic effect and then swept tidily under the carpet. Bennett’s prose veers between stodgy formality (“They stopped at the concession building briefly for a soft drink”) and locker room lingo (“He did enjoy the generous side view of her tits that the skimpy halter top allowed”). There’s just enough genuine baseball action, however, to keep sports enthusiasts turning the pages, and teens whose tastes run to daytime drama might even find some guilty pleasure here. EB

BIAL, RAYMOND  
*Ghost Towns of the American West;* written and illus. with photographs by Raymond Bial. Houghton, 2001 [48p]  
ISBN 0-618-06557-1 $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-6

Bial conducts a photo tour of both the truly abandoned settlements and the conscientiously preserved and/or reconstructed sites which are now collectively known as “ghost” towns. The text rambles unsteadily, with shivery allusions to spirit residents (“at night, the plaintive hoo-hoo may be an owl nesting in a nearby saguaro cactus—or the moaning of a restless ghost up in the graveyard”), often-repeated summaries of the boom-and-bust cycle of Western mining and cow towns, and underexplained nuggets of local lore (just who were those Earp brothers, anyhow?). Towns are not consistently identified in the captioned photos, and pictures do not always coordinate with pages of text. Still, admirers of legendary gunslingers and card sharps will probably overlook the clichés (“Even the memories, along with the hopes and dreams of the inhabitants, have blown away, like so much dust in the wind”) and happily breathe in the thick atmosphere that the decrepit bathhouses and shacks, shadowy gallows, and worn tombstones provide. EB

BODE, JANET  
ISBN 0-689-81945-5 $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

What with problem novels taking on global-level tragedies and intricate dramas of human suffering, the plain old agony of divorce sometimes seems literarily passé. As Bode and Mack remind us, divorce is still very much in human fashion, and there are still a lot of youngsters struggling with the effects. Readers will hear kid views on the process and receive collections of kid suggestions for dealing with specific problems (and though there are mature approaches included, the advice doesn’t seem sanitized for adult protection, which will reassure youngsters); they’ll
also get a chance to hear from kids in intact families making clear both that they’re not free from problems and they’re capable of being good friends to people in a different situation. While there are a lot of good points made here (some kids mention that they’re glad their parents divorced, for instance) and a fair amount of diversity in response (kids’ support systems range from good friends to God), the organization is muddled and there’s a lot of repetition of the same points. The section aimed at adults contains plenty of material equally if not more useful for children, and there’s no rigor about sources for statements of fact from interviewed experts. This is nonetheless likely to be bolstering for many youngsters, who will appreciate what’s essentially a hug from authorities and a reminder that they’re not alone. Mack’s interpolated comic-strip narratives add accessibility, as does the included art from children of divorce. Lists of further resources (including some good advice on search-engine use) are included. DS

BORDEN, LOUISE  

This adulatory biography of the pioneer black aviator, fashioned into ragged-right text that suggests free verse, emphasizes the inspirational aspects of Coleman’s life—overcoming poverty and a limited formal education, and her commitment to spreading the message of self-improvement among African-American school children. Borden spends much time taxi-ing down Coleman’s career preparations, but she never quite takes off with details of her feats as an aviatrix, the very core of her life’s work that children will most want to learn about and admire. The text seems unaware of Bessie’s black predecessors in flight, and it often lapses into a breathlessly earnest tone that borders on pretentious: “And fly she did!/ Just like the pilots in the news stories of the Chicago Defender./ Just like the pilots in the United States/ who were men and who were white./ Bessie Coleman learned the same skills that they knew/ with courage in her heart.” Nor do Flavin’s flat, stiff gouache paintings inject much excitement; she offers the same number of scenes of manicurist Coleman filing nails as of barnstormer Coleman piloting her planes (two each). Girls with their heads in the clouds (in the best possible sense) will be happier skimming the skies with Don Brown’s *Ruth Law Thrills a Nation* (BCCB 12/93). EB

BRISSON, PAT  

Bertie had a loose tooth, and “no matter how hard he pushed, no matter how hard he poked, that dumb old tooth hung on.” Inevitably, out that tooth comes, courtesy of an out-of-control kickball, and Bertie happily contemplates sticking his tongue through the “square hole” on school picture day. Subsequent chapters concentrate on additional changes to Bertie’s appearance: his younger sister accidentally whacks him in the eye and gives him a shiner, then she cuts his hair while he’s sleeping, giving him “a very interesting haircut.” Brisson has already shown herself to be closely in touch with the concerns of primary graders (*Hot Fudge Hero*, BCCB 6/97), and the saga of Bertie’s image problems has that same conversational intimacy. Bluthenthal’s black-and-white drawings feature a cheerful Bertie who bounces back from each new alteration with humor and enthusiasm. Car-
toony characters with slightly cockeyed expressions add to the good-natured tone of this early chapter book. Readers will probably agree with Bertie's mom: he looks just "spiffy." JMD

BRUSS, DEBORAH  
*Book! Book! Book!*; illus. by Tiphanie Beeke.  Levine/Scholastic, 2001  [32p]  
ISBN 0-439-13525-7 $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R 4-7 yrs

When you realize that "Book! Book! Book!" is the utterance of a hen, you can probably guess which joke turns into a story here. Bruss sets it on a farm, where the animals are sad because the children have gone back to school, so they decide to go into town in search of diversion. The library looks good to them, but the librarian can't make heads or tails of the horse's neigh, the cow's moo, the pig's oink, and so on; only when the hen demands "Book! Book! Book!" does the librarian understand and provide the required texts, thereby pleasing all the animals except for the bullfrog (who, of course, has already read it, read it, read it). The expansion of the joke is reasonably well supported, and the opportunities for animal noises (why not get your audience primed to oink and bleat along?) add a performative pleasure; the joke itself will tickle many youngsters, who may not have encountered it. The watercolor and acrylic art teeters between the naive and the amateurish; the compositions are sometimes slightly haphazard, and the impressionistic approximation of the figures doesn't always obscure some unduly creative interpretations of animal anatomy. The fairgrounds palette provides a springlike cheer, however, and Beeke's departure from the dull restrictions of realism when it comes to animal color enhances the pleasure of this gently fantastical world (the blue horse is particularly winning). Since this is free from the self-consciousness that often plagues library-set picture books, it might make a particularly fetching icebreaker in a library introduction. DS

CHANDLER, ELIZABETH  
*Dark Secrets: Legacy of Lies.*  Archway, 2000  182p  
R Gr. 6-9

After sixteen years of rejection from her grandmother, who resents her daughter's interracial marriage and the couple's adopting of children, Megan finally travels to the old lady's Maryland estate in response to an out-of-the-blue invitation. The situation is uncomfortable: not only is her grandmother stern and dismissive, but Megan's attractive same-age cousin Matt is coldly unwelcoming as well. The unease extends well beyond that, however, as Megan finds herself enmeshed in a family mystery surrounding the death of her great-aunt Avril, her grandmother's sister who died sixty years ago; the plot thickens when it starts to look as if apparent coincidences are in fact supernatural manifestations, and that Megan is actually the reincarnation of Avril, seeking justice for her death. Chandler (author M. C. Helldorfer writing under a pseudonym) has a pleasingly gothic touch right from the du Maurier-esque opening ("Last night I visited the house again"), and she keeps the pace moving, with plenty of suspense, foreboding, and eerie occurrences. Characterization adds substance, with Megan's forthrightness, skepticism, and sharp tongue giving her some of the flair of a Barbara Michaels heroine and making her success in finding the truth plausible, and even the supporting cast is intriguingly drawn. There's a bit of convenience in Megan's quick diagnosis of Matt's dyslexia and in the concluding plot twists, but the atmosphere, readability, and strong-
minded protagonist offer fair compensation. Readers looking for a generous helping of supernatural chills with a dollop of romance and family drama will settle down happily with this. EAB

CHILD, LAUREN  *Beware of the Storybook Wolves*; written and illus. by Lauren Child. Levine/Scholastic, 2001  [32p]  
ISBN 0-439-20500-X $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  7-10 yrs

One night Herb’s mother forgets to take the nighttime storybook with her when she leaves, and Herb’s worst fears are realized when a pair of wolves leap out of the volume. Herb distracts the slavering (and easily confused) wolves with a claim of being fit only for dessert, but on a hunt through another storybook for Jell-O (“Jell-O is an appetizer! Everybody knows that”), he rouses more storybook crew. A fairy godmother gets involved, putting one wolf into a very fetching gown and finally turning the other into a caterpillar, whereupon Herb returns safely to sleep—but next time the story only musters up a caterpillar in the wolf’s place. The book-referentiality here is amusing, and Child has some divertingly breezy turns of phrase (“it had all turned out well and went happy-ever-afterly”). There’s a whole lot of text here, however, and the story rambles, often losing pace; the listeners with the patience for the length probably won’t warm to the youthful focus and the archness of tone, and would-be readers-alone may find the complicated typeface challenging. The art places cutout line-and-watercolor figures against color-washed backgrounds, suggesting John Burningham’s illustrations, but the brawny yet slapdash lines and scribbled faces have an animated vigor. This might be a useful bridge between the comedy of James Marshall’s adaptations or Eugene Trivizas’ *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (BCCB 9/93) and the harder-edged sophistication of Scieszka’s *The Stinky Cheese Man*. DS

COLEMAN, EVELYN  *Born in Sin*. Jackson/Atheneum, 2001  [240p]  
ISBN 0-689-83833-6 $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 9-12

Fourteen-year-old Keisha is smart, diligent, and determined, and she’s aiming for medical school at a local Atlanta university, which offers a special program for gifted high-school students. Her high-school counselor can’t see past Keisha’s home in the projects, however, and instead enrolls her in a summer program for “at-risk children” (“She sound like she talking about some ants who don’ showed up uninvited to her picnic”). Though initially furious, Keisha finds some benefits in the program: she makes a friend in tough classmate Betty, begins to get interested in Betty’s older brother Malik, and, most significantly, discovers she’s a natural swimmer and starts successfully competing. She’s still facing the obstacle of payment for her deferred medical-school program, though, and she begins to suspect that her mother is dipping into the dishonorable and perhaps the illegal in order to obtain the money. Keisha is a forceful and attractive character, and her ebullient narration will pull readers right in. The author provides other evocative depictions, especially in Keisha’s strict, fiercely supportive mother and in some other secondary characters, particularly the brash but ultimately self-defeating Betty; there’s also some sharp insight into intraracial as well as interracial prejudice (as an underclass African American, Keisha gets as much condescension from middle-
class blacks as from whites). The book falters in other areas, though, failing to make believable some of the more broadly drawn characters and Keisha's sudden leap from nonswimmer to Olympic hopeful, and events tumble into implausible melodrama at the end (Keisha's mother isn't taking drugs or dancing nude but doing a club's books, Keisha narrowly avoids a rape, her never-identified father is revealed to be a neighborhood activist, and her mother reveals the childhood trauma that ended up ruining her marriage). Keisha's vivid and witty voice, however, will remain memorable long after the book's close. DS

COOPER, MICHAEL L. Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II. Clarion, 2000 118p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-395-91375-6 $16.00 R Gr. 5-8

Cooper relates the injustice done to Japanese residents of the United States sent to internment camps during World War II, and the subsequent efforts of their sons and daughters to prove their patriotism on the battlefields of World War II. The book starkly presents the rising war hysteria and the racism that led to the internment of a half-million Japanese in dismal and poorly equipped camps. The author leaves the camps to follow the young Japanese-American men who volunteered to fight in World War II. The combat training and military experiences of the two Japanese-American battalions, the 100th and 442nd, make up the bulk of this history. The first battalion to see action was the 100th, referred to as "the Purple Heart Battalion" because of the heavy casualties its men suffered; the 442nd became famous for finding a lost regiment trapped behind enemy lines. The author tells two parallel stories, juxtaposing the saga of the soldiers who gave their lives and limbs for their country with the tale of that country's treatment of the soldiers' families back home. Black-and-white period photographs make the featured individuals painfully real, quotes from internees and soldiers bring the shame close to home, and stories of horror and heroism under fire keep the pace moving. A chronology of events, detailed notes, a bibliography, and an index are included. JMD

COWELL, CRESSIDA What Shall We Do with the Boo-Hoo Baby?; illus. by Ingrid Godon. Scholastic, 2000 26p ISBN 0-439-15311-5 $15.95 R 1-3 yrs

Make room in storytime for this participatory tale: "The baby said 'BOO-HOO-HOO!'" and the cow, dog, cat, and duck that just happen to be standing at the kitchen door come in to comfort him. The duck offers a toy, but baby only wails. The animals are desperate for a solution: "Feed him," said the dog. So they fed the baby. 'Moo!' said the cow. 'Quack!' said the duck. 'Meow!' said the cat. 'Bow-wow!' said the dog, and . . . 'BOO-HOO-HOO!' said the baby." Bathing and playing with the baby have no better result, and it's not until the duck says "Put him to bed" that peace—and silence—reigns. This is a well-constructed bit of cumulative fluff that will easily find a toddler-time niche. It features some of the most popular participatory sounds (moo, quack, meow) this side of Old MacDonald, not to mention that fabulous, loud, and funny "BOO-HOO-HOO" that is sure to make the rafters ring. Godon's illustrations have echoes of G. Brian Karas' style in their black-outlined, cleanly defined shapes and uncluttered compositions. The animals are appropriately stuffed-toyish and the baby appropri-
Franz Creffield arrived in Corvallis, Oregon in 1903 and lured a number of respectable townspeople from their mainstream churches with his fiery preaching. Soon his small church turned into a cult, as he renamed himself Joshua the Second and promised the young women of his Holy Disciples that one of them would become the Second Mother to a reincarnation of Jesus. Religious fervor spun out of control, and Joshua led them into a downward spiral of sexual seduction and family breakups that ended in insanity, murders (including his own), and suicides. Crew derives the factual outline of the tale from newspaper reports of the period, but supplies “imagined” motivations for the participants as she retells the sordid events through the eyes of teenager Eva Hurt. Readers never see enough of Joshua in action to fully understand and accept his charisma, and although Crew doesn’t shy away from confronting the sexual hold Joshua has on these young women, she explores neither the realistic possibility of jealousies within the cult, nor the fears or hopes concerning pregnancy one would expect within this group. Melodrama and tragedy carry the day, but thoughtful readers will ponder the nature of the Corvallis community’s outrage and vengeance: “All they had to do was tell the doctors and lawyers and judges we wouldn’t wear hats or sit in chairs or cook their suppers, and faster than you could say ‘Lord in heaven deliver us,’ papers were signed certifying our insanity.” Background notes and period photos are included.

Kelly’s having a normal sixth grade, getting excited about an environmental project and a boy she likes, when it all changes: a bad car accident sends her to the hospital with a broken leg and extensive, disfiguring burns that will need multiple surgeries and months to years of recuperation. Kelly’s days are now filled with debridement and physical therapy, and the challenge to her self-image comes not from the possibility of pimples but from having to wear a compression mask over her head for a year. Eight weeks in the hospital is only the beginning of her trials, however, as her return home forces her to deal with her friends and with the circumstances of her accident. The book is sometimes programmatic and heavy-handed, especially in its foreshadowing, but the details of the story are gripping. The technical information is plentiful but not obtrusive, and Kelly’s emotional and physical ordeal is authentically portrayed; the hospital world, where despite careful explanations patients are often left in a sea of mystery, is especially vivid. While Kelly’s friends, in their loyalty, are rather optimistically portrayed, there’s enough primary difficulty in Kelly’s life anyway, and familial issues—Kelly’s divorced and distant father never makes an appearance, and her mother struggles with the secret of her
Dewey relates the experience of her four-month trip to the Antarctic peninsula in diary entries, letters, sketches, and photographs. Details range from a meeting with a flock of penguins ("They huddle close, smelling of guano and salt water, gently tugging at my clothing with their bills") to a tasting experiment with the blue whale’s diet ("We got a small fry pan, then melted butter and cooked up the krill") to a glacier climb that takes a dangerous turn ("I felt myself dropping straight down. A crack had appeared under me, a crevasse in the glacier"). The effect is sometimes more bitty than browsable (readers are left to work out who the recipients of the letters are, there’s no clear map with legend so viewers may not realize Dewey never actually penetrates the Antarctic Circle, and the landscape’s scope isn’t well represented), but the anecdotal approach has its merits. Budding young naturalists will be particularly intrigued with the captioned colored-pencil sketches of wildlife that thickly populate the pages (reminiscent of Edward Wilson’s famous Antarctic drawings), and they further suggest a picture of the author herself picking her way through the ice and rocks to find a suitable place to sketch. Tidbits about ice (a particularly interesting photograph captures an optical illusion caused by ice crystals in the air) and even station life (the author keeps the secret of the cook’s pet cat) fill out the picture further. More inviting and personal than Markle’s Super Cool Science: South Pole Stations Past, Present, and Future (BCCB 4/98), this will suit readers of a variety of capabilities with a taste for frontiers.

DiTerlizzi, Tony Ted; written and illus. by Tony DiTerlizzi. Simon, 2001 [40p]
ISBN 0-689-83235-4 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 6-9 yrs

Move over, Harvey, there’s a new imaginary friend in town: he’s big, he’s pink, he’s Ted, the humongous bunny (or is it a pig?) of Birthday Boy’s dreams. The narrator (aka Birthday Boy) relates his adventures (aka trouble-making) with his “imaginary friend,” but any trouble they get into (drawing on the walls, turning the study into an indoor-pool) is the fault of the narrator’s neglectful father. Once past the visual surprise of the slightly dissipated-looking, pooka-like Ted, the plot trajectory is pretty predictable—the narrator’s dad remembers his own “imaginary friend” Ned, and father and son (and Ted/Ned) live happily ever after—but that doesn’t make this rollicking little tale any less fun. DiTerlizzi (author/illustrator of Jimmy Zangwow’s Out-of-This-World Moon Pie Adventure, BCCB 5/00) anchors his fantasy in Rockwellian clarity through mixed-media illustrations that feature expressive characters in a nostalgically-retro environment. The body language of boy and quasi-bunny articulately evokes their enthusiasm for their projects as well as their dismay at the father’s responses to their various efforts at home improvement. Despite the offbeat nature of the illustrations (there is just something odd
about a huge pink lop-eared critter with an actual button for a belly-button standing in a perfectly normal, fifties-style living room), this is a wryly funny tale that balances the whimsical with the ridiculous. JMD

DOWNING, WICK  
*Leonardo’s Hand.* Houghton, 2001  [208p]  
ISBN 0-618-07893-2 $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys  

Nard, short for Leonard, turns up at a new foster home; he’s not sanguine about life on a pig farm, but he finds that his inventiveness allows him to contribute despite his disability (he was born without a left hand). Soon he also finds himself growing attached to the old lady who runs the place and to her great-niece, Julie, who’s in seventh grade with Nard. He’s therefore concerned when Julie develops a back problem that keeps her from her beloved dancing and that will require surgery that the family can ill afford, and he determines to win the requisite funds in a local contest for a human-powered flight machine. He’s got a surprising ally in this endeavor: the dismembered left hand of Leonardo da Vinci (of whom Nard is a reincarnation), which elegantly draws Nard’s plans. This is already a hard plot to sell, but the book adds even more unlikely and/or clichéd elements such as a looming mortgage on the farm, hostility from the rich suburban locals, a bank robbery attempt by Julie’s mentally unpredictable father, a shady patent agent’s double dealing, the hand’s miraculous cure of Julie’s back, and so on. The result is a jumble of events that lack individual impact but nonetheless try to substitute for effective characterization. Nard’s narration explains the people and relationships rather than depicting them through action, so there’s no real involvement with the cast to carry readers through the piled-on plot. There are some interesting tidbits about human-powered flight (and it’s too bad there aren’t more instead of the other plot elements); ultimately, however, they’re not enough to get this vehicle off the ground. DS

GROSSMAN, BILL  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028010-7 $14.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

The team behind *My Little Sister Ate One Hare* (BCCB 1/97) returns with this collection of eighteen illustrated poems. The approach is broadly and solidly jokey, with an emphasis on eating (the titular Timothy is reminded by his mother to be glad he didn’t swallow a goat) and plays on words (John Paul Mullers was the victim of a paint-can explosion, and “now everyone knows him as Art”). Grossman employs a sort of modified limerick form throughout, with all verses six brief lines long and powered by galloping anapests. The formal repetition starts to pound after a few poems, and some of the scansion fails to achieve the crispness necessary in such short forms. The humor will squarely hit the youthful funnybone, however: there’s Edward Lear’s taste for disaster with the back-of-the-bus song emphasis on simple twists (the boy who becomes what he eats disappears when he eats nothing) and snorkable punchlines (Old Ned is walking with a horse on his head because he’s too tired to run). Hawkes balances the broad with the bold—popeyed characters pop out against vivid contrasting backgrounds, with most spreads touched with electrical notes of violet, orange, chartreuse, and other arresting hues while
brushstrokes give a frescolike texture to the paint that adds a depth to the visuals. While this might be a bit much for a straight-on readthrough, it’s a natural for selected sharing, and the clear print and appealing subject will draw in some early readers who’ll enjoy browsing among the rhymed exploits of the hapless. DS


When Princess Torina’s father, King Kareed of Archeld, conquers the neighboring land of Bellandra, he brings back three important things: the legendary Sword of Bellandra, which is rumored to be invincible or cursed depending on the hand that wields it; the thirteen-year-old prince Landen of Bellandra; and a magic crystal, in which Princess Torina quickly finds that she can see future events. Torina refuses to keep Landen as a slave despite her father’s wishes, and Torina and Landen begin a secret friendship, in which he teaches her the warrior skills she so desperately wants to know. Torina is betrothed to her father’s most trusted advisor, Vesputo; unfortunately, this trust is misplaced, and Torina correctly surmises (with the help of her crystal) that her fiancé will betray her father. She is too late to warn the king, and instead witnesses his murder at Vesputo’s hand, after which Vesputo seizes the crown. Torina must flee for her life; Landen, accused of King Kareed’s murder, flees as well. Intricate twists of fate bring the two together, and Torina ultimately reclaims the land of Archeld with Landen as her betrothed. Hanley’s language is rich and vivid without being flowery, allowing adventure and suspense to guide this classic fantasy story. Despite a plethora of political machinations, Hanley’s touch is personal, involving the reader with politics only as they affect the heroine and hero of the story. Young adult fantasy readers will welcome this talented new writer to the fold of beloved authors who write intricate and moving coming of age tales set in fantastical realms. KM


This collection of brief seasonal poems and accompanying quilted illustrations traces the progression of the year from spring to winter. Shorter poems, such as the poem about autumn foliage called “Pageantry” (“The trees are wearing/scarlet gowns/and golden crowns/and bits of them/are falling down”), tend to be more successful than the longer pieces, which sound somewhat forced. For most of these poems, Hines has created cloth designs that frame the words, although a few of the quilt blocks appear to have been digitally altered to create uncluttered background space for the text. In the poem “Encore,” about a hummingbird, the poem nestles in a quilted garden where hummingbirds feed, and several stitched outlines of hummingbirds on the white fabric background suggest their rapid motion in an almost cartoon-like fashion, showing the outline of where the bird was moments ago. Hines also cleverly arranges the quilted art, as in a two-page spread of poems about autumn, wherein the left-hand page shows leaves streaming down from the trees while the facing page uses a similar quilt block upside down, so that the leaves appear to be falling into piles at the bottom of the page. Despite some unevenness in the poetry, the visual appeal and detail of the quilt work will engage young
viewers. Notes about the quilt-making process are presented at the end of the book. KM

HOFFMAN, ALICE  
*Aquamarine*.
Scholastic, 2001  [112p]
ISBN 0-439-09863-7 $16.95
Reviewed from galleys

Hailey and Claire have been best friends forever, but now Claire’s grandparents (her guardians since the death of her parents) are moving to Florida, and Claire is moving with them. The two friends are spending their last summer together at the decaying, soon-to-be-demolished Capri Beach Club, trying to wring every last second of togetherness from the swiftly passing days. A violent storm causes flooding along the coast, and the Capri pool, close to the ocean, is swamped. The two girls peruse the damage on the morning after and discover a mermaid by the name of Aquamarine stranded at the bottom of the pool. Aquamarine is self-absorbed and spoiled, but she falls in love with Raymond (the college guy who runs the concession stand) anyway. After a Hailey-and-Claire-arranged date both man and mermaid are besotted, but Aquamarine must return to the sea or die. The tide rises and the mermaid is gone; soon Claire is gone, too, moved to Florida at summer’s end. Hoffman is very neat, tying up all loose ends tightly if not particularly imaginatively. No one suffers for very long: Aquamarine gives Raymond a magical shell to call her and gives the girls magical shells that will always keep them connected to each other. This is more short novella or long short story than fully developed novel; the prose is dialogue-intense and spare, and motivation and logic are swept before the girls’ (and Raymond’s) willing acceptance of Aquamarine. Hoffman’s bare-bones style doesn’t permit much tonal variety or emotional emphasis, but mermaids are an inescapably popular subject for young readers, and a wide range of them will want to dive, however briefly, into this story. JMD

HOLUB, JOAN  
Reviewed from galleys

While these books aren’t as specifically focused as their titles suggest, they’re none-the-less a pair of informative introductions to kitty- and doggy-dom. Each spread answers a posed question, using color photographs and sometimes line-and-watercolor art to extend and illustrate the concept. The questions range from the authentically specific (“Why do dogs pee so often on a walk?”) to the usefully general (“What is the difference between wild cats and pet cats?”, complete with two nifty photographed pairings of domestic and wild felines engaging in the same actions). The answers sometimes cut a few corners (not just Doberman Pinschers can be guard dogs, for instance), and these titles don’t go very deep, but there’s enough compact and thoughtful material here to keep kids intrigued and to pique their interest for more (which they may find in Jean Craighead George’s slightly more technical pairing, *How to Talk to Your Dog* and *How to Talk to Your Cat*, BCCB 4/00). The photogenic subjects get plenty of flattering and amusing visuals, and youngsters who open the books just planning to “awww” over the pictures may find themselves dipping into the browsable and easy text. A pair of attractive subjects in good, solid easy-reading form, these will set professionals to purring—tail wagging is still best left to the judgment of the individual. DS

The aunts of the title are sisters who live on an island where they take care of the injured creatures that wash up on their shores. Their job (which they consider a "Sacred Trust") doesn't stop at oil-slicked seagulls, however: baby krakens, mermaids, selkies, stoorworms, and sundry other mythical creatures come to the island for help and, afterwards, stay. The women love their life, but they are concerned that they are getting too old to cope with their work effectively. The aunts are quite the eccentrics, but their logic is unassailable: apprentices need to be acquired. Kidnapping is apparently in order, and three of the women set forth for the mainland. Possible apprentices Minette and Fabio are deliberately taken from their unpleasant home situations; Lambert is taken by mistake, and everyone lives to regret it. Ibbotson has such a domestic manner when dealing with magic that even the most outrageous developments seem perfectly plausible. The author sets her idyllic (but not prissy) island society against the excesses of modern life, and it is quite clear where her sympathies lie. She has little patience with exploitative media, irresponsible parenting, or ecological piracy, all of which she pillories with her sometimes caustic wit. A quick pace, colorful characters, and a bang-up rescue-at-sea finale makes this a great choice for reading alone or aloud. Hawkes' line drawings delicately detail the dastardly doings; a cleanly drafted map of the island sets creatures/characters in their assigned places. Once again Ibbotson (*Which Witch?, BCCB 9/99*) takes readers on a voyage to a place where magic is mundane and it's the people who are strange. JMD


Nick and his youth league team, the Rockets, are facing the season's championship game, and their routines at practice and on the big day serve as object lessons for a primary grades audience on the rules and protocols of baseball. Isadora toggles between the fictional storyline (thin, but reasonably effective), set in heavy type, and equipment, definitions, rules, tips, and etiquette, set in lighter gray. The flow of this dual narration is not always as smooth as one might wish, and a few terms are underexplained, but Isadora does manage to make sense of basic strategies and offer some elementary but sound pointers for rookies all over the field: "The pitcher must be in contact with the rubber mound when she or he begins delivery"; "Call for the ball when you run to catch it"; "Don't run with untied shoelaces." Isadora's line and watercolor cast of enthusiastic, sportsmanlike champs giving the game their all will certainly lock hearts with their audience. Listeners who have a duffel bag of questions from Gibbons' *My Baseball Book* (*BCCB 4/00*) will find more answers here. EB


Jackson, author of *The Bone Detectives* (*BCCB 4/96*) and herself the daughter of a twin, gives readers insight into the world of simultaneous siblings. Seven brief
chapters examine the connection between twins, the genesis of multiples, supertwins (multiples with more than two), and other issues; personal insights from and stories of various twins, along with sidebar focuses, provide the narrative with a chatty browsability. Counterpointing the celebratory cheer are generous but accessible helpings of science (including sophisticated information such as the X-inactivation that means even identicals may have different characteristics), realism (an acknowledgment of the bitterness of surviving one’s twin), and history (the chilling past of twins in Mengele’s Auschwitz experiments). The picture-book format is inviting, with photographs set at scrapbook-casual angles and accented with tidy shadow-borders (one might be forgiven, after perusing these photogenic subjects, for thinking that multiples run cuter than the general aggregate of humanity). There are some organizational irregularities (the Holocaust focus is an odd ending) and some confusing sentences, and there’s a lamentable absence of further resources (the only end matter is a glossary with page references). Nonetheless, this is a surprisingly varied examination of doubled lives that goes well beyond the “aw, how cute” approach; even multiples may find reassurance and interest here, and singletons will get a glimpse of how different life can be in tandem with a birthmate.

JENKINS, EMILY  Five Creatures; illus. by Tomek Bogacki. Foster/Farrar, 2001 [26p]
ISBN 0-374-32341-0  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

Numbers take on a whole new meaning in this exploration of the narrator’s household, which holds three people (her and her parents) and two cats. The assessments offer some amusing juxtapositions (the household contains “two who like to eat mice. Only one who likes to eat beets”) and some oddly enlightening parallels (there’s “one who sings loud late at night”—the gray cat—“And one who sings in the morning”—the daddy). This is more a catalogue than a story, but there’s a delicate yet slightly lunatic charm to the sequence and a warm, cozy close (“Five who kiss each other. And five who sit together in the evening by the fire”). Bogacki’s illustrations are dense with short, painterly strokes that blend nearly together, giving an overall kitten-fur texture that’s cuddly but somewhat homogenizing; there’s also a misty look that’s somewhat distancing. The flattened Mercator-style perspective adds a casual flair, though, and the happy-go-lucky family, especially the stiff-whiskered felines, are endearing figures. Young audiences will be unable to resist responding with their own new Venn diagrams of family practice. DS

JOHNSON, ANGELA  Those Building Men; illus. by Barry Moser. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-590-66521-9  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

Johnson’s free-verse poem extols the heroism of the men who built America’s enduring infra- and towering superstructure—“those shadowy building men—Our fathers. . . . Poor and sometimes from far away.” Her litany encompasses bridge builders, canal diggers, rail men, high steel workers, surveyors, and lumbermen, and subtly implies through repeated references to “our fathers” that the days of hard labor are past—a notion which may come as a surprise to children whose parents are currently engaged in the same activities. Effort is made to demonstrate
the breadth of both the undertakings and the participants, but some rather obvious candidates are missing; for example, no Chinese workers appear on the railroad and no mountain or underwater tunneling is shown. Moreover, Moser’s craggy, chiseled laborers (nothing “shadowy” about them) are captured head on and close up, and scant reference to the ground far below them diminishes the sense of danger that accompanied their work. This may be a useful discussion starter for a Labor Day program, but children with an interest in construction would probably appreciate a bit less lyricism and a bit more information. EB


In this rosily illustrated bedtime story, a mother, father, and grandmother soothe a tired baby with a kissing countdown to sleep. The various grownups give “ten little kisses on teeny tiny toes/ nine laughing kisses on busy, wriggly feet/ eight squishy kisses on chubby, yummy knees” and so on, until “one last kiss” on the baby’s “sleepy, dreamy head.” Each spread features a short line about the number of kisses; beneath the line is a chain of little pink hearts that separates the text from the featured numeral. The mixed-media illustrations (gouache, collage, and colored pencil) feature the well-kissed baby in her pink sleeper (decorated with hot pink hearts) being hugged by a (presumed) sibling (wearing red hearts), in a pink-wallpapered room decorated with flowered curtains and sheets. The candy-heart palette is overwhelmingly reminiscent of the designer-nursery-school school of decorating, but the occasional touches of deeper hues serve to anchor the froth. All that kissy stuff (and all those hues of blushing pink) gets pretty gooey and girly, but that won’t keep goofy uncles and girly aunts from stockpiling this “kiss and read” book for present and future nieces and nephews. JMD

KLASS, DAVID You Don’t Know Me. Foster/Farrar, 2001 [272p] ISBN 0-374-38706-0 $17.00 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-12

“You don’t know me” is narrator John’s refrain as he negotiates life while almost overwhelmed by the ironies of his existence: his school is a place “for becoming stupid” and is therefore an anti-school, he lives in a house that he doesn’t consider his house, and he shares it with the man who is not his father. There’s also his dramatic irony of knowledge—John knows, while his mother and school doesn’t, that his mother’s boyfriend has no compunction about physically abusing him, and that the abuse is escalating. While John snags a date with the girl of his dreams (which goes awry when his dreams prove to be an inaccurate predictor of her personality), gets assigned a tuba solo in band, and attempts to negotiate other normal fourteen-year-old obstacles, the secret knowledge of his home life looms ever larger until finally there’s a violent confrontation with his soon-to-be stepfather. Klass is effective with John’s deliberately distanced voice, his constant dancing with and away from reality (he’s even got an imaginary tribe, the Lashasa Palulu, whose ways get anthropologically discussed when there’s a need to analyze behavior), and his brittle and even dorky defenses, and the rising tension is suspenseful. Sometimes the humor undercuts the mood, however, and the events are not as well controlled as John’s narrative voice—it’s not clear why the music teacher warms to John, for instance, or what exactly makes his bandmate Violet call him
"the best boy in this whole school" and scoop him up on the rebound from his dream girl. The underlying desperation has impact and authenticity, and teens fond of the glibness of Julian Thompson with a darker edge will welcome John’s hard-won triumph.


Twelve-year-old John is a little nervous about his first solo visit to his dad’s Los Angeles home (his older sister has given up after years of unsatisfying parental interaction), but the visit’s going as usual, with his father including this summer’s girlfriend in all the family activities and leaving John behind whenever work calls; even the death of John’s beloved dog back in Kansas elicits little fatherly compassion. John does at least manage incipient friendships with Beau, a kid his age in his dad’s apartment complex, and with Iris, his dad’s girlfriend’s niece, but the real reward comes when his father tears ligaments in his knee and John finally gets to spend some serious private time with his incapacitated dad. Koss, author of The Ashwater Experiment (BCCB 6/99), effectively links the reader’s point of view to narrator John’s, so that to both protagonist and reader Dad starts out looking like a heedless jerk (he learns about the death of John’s dog but leaves it to John’s mother to break the news on the phone) and then becomes clearer as a complicated person who genuinely loves his kids but has little understanding of how to maintain a relationship with them or anybody else. Beau is both an amiable companion and a useful milepost for John’s acceptance as John lets go his jealousy of Beau’s easy familiarity with John’s father’s life. This has a blend of accessibility and sharp perception that makes it a perfect next step for readers just growing beyond P. J. Petersen. DS


Sixth graders at Marc Chaikin’s school in Queens may be coyly labeled by room number by the administration, but all the students know that 6-321 is the smart class and 6-309 is the bottom of the heap. Principal Mr. Eisenman’s stern warning (“I will not tolerate uncouth behavior or disturbance of the peace”) hasn’t the least effect on deep-rooted animosities between the classes, and as bullying escalates throughout the school year, hostile eruptions simply move off school grounds. All-out war is inevitable, but on the day of the planned rumble President Kennedy is assassinated; suddenly the heat of childish hatred cools and the kids begin to put their quarrels into perspective. Marc reviews the past school year with detachment and analysis that don’t quite ring true for a young adolescent: “From being an average student or worse, I worked my way up into the top handful of the class—all thanks to Mr. Vigoritti’s praise.” Moreover, a string of background themes (the Cold War, the class play Julius Caesar, Tareyton’s “rather fight than switch” cigarette commercials, and the Kennedy assassination) are none too subtle in directing readers’ attention to the danger or inanity of solving conflict through violence. Still, the postures and threats of junior high are realistically portrayed, and the brevity and straightforward approach of this novel could make it an especially good choice for reluctant readers. EB

Jolie is frightened—her family is housing a white woman who's come from the north to teach Freedom School, and local bigots are already demonstrating that they're willing to break the law to display their displeasure. Though the community's church is burned, nothing will stop Freedom School, and attendees listen raptly to teacher Annie's words about Countee Cullen, Jacob Lawrence, Benjamin Banneker, and other blacks of achievement whose stories are new to them. When there's a threat to the newly built school, Jolie finally realizes how much this learning—and Annie—means to her. The climactic danger (which never turns out to be anything but an excuse for Jolie to realize her determination) is forced, and there's no shortage of didacticism and sentimentality ("when it came to school and learning, she was never going to let bein' scared get in her way again") in the narrative. There's also genuine warmth and conviction, however, and the danger of the situation is convincing. Cooper's glamorized, softly dusty pastels overemphasize the beautiful and monumental aspects of his figures, which is in keeping with the book's tone; Jolie is an appealingly thoughtful girl, however, who effectively puts a face on the situation. With some adult explanation this could make an accessible introduction to a less-famous chapter of the civil rights movement. An author's note and bibliography are included. DS


Following up on their picture-book fantasy *Cowboy Bunnies*, Loomis and Eitan turn to the stars. In brief verse (with the rhythm, as flap copy points out, of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"), the narrative describes the bunnies' space exploration, from the preparation when they "slip into their suits with pockets" to the spacewalk where they "roll up, float up/ Through the air" to their meeting with "bunnies from/ Another place!" Finally they return, because "bunnies ALWAYS/ Come back home." This is sort of *Runaway Bunny* as done by NASA, and none the worse for that: the poetry generally avoids jingly and opts instead for sweetly concise, and the combination of cuddly bunnies and cool high-powered space rockets is going to be irresistible to certain audience sectors. Eitan's mixed-media art combines solid, informally streamlined bunnies with expanses of patterned background; the effect is sometimes more designerly than illustrative, and the bunnies are distant and homogenized, but the space world is imaginatively portrayed with fanciful bunny-touched constellations and atmospheric shadows. This would make a satisfying lap or bedtime book for many budding young astronauts, and maybe next time the space-rabbits will work out a way to get to Rosemary Wells' *Bunny Planet.* DS

MARRIN, ALBERT  *George Washington & the Founding of a Nation.* Dutton, 2001  276p  illus. with photographs  ISBN 0-525-46481-6  $30.00  R  Gr. 6-10

Happily for fans of military history, the founding of this nation required armed confrontation, and Washington's roles in pre-Revolutionary skirmishes (well,
massacres) with the French and as commander of the Continental Army are necessarily a central focus of this overview. As he did in his outstanding works on Lee and Grant (Virginia’s General and Unconditional Surrender, BCCB 1/95 and 3/94), Marrin again displays keen sensitivity to the inherent contradictions of a warrior/statesman. He bluntly addresses Washington’s early blood lust (“For the first time, men had died by his command. The experience pleased him no end. . . . ‘I heard bullets whistle and believe me there was something charming in the sound’”) but contrasts that with the high standards Washington set for himself as president (“A president must be, and must be seen to be, a good person. . . . I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain the character of an honest man, as well as prove that I am”). Copious notes and an extensive bibliography, as well as an index and a broad sampling of period artwork, will certainly benefit report writers, but real history buffs will just settle in for a satisfying cover to cover read. EB

MARTIN, JACQUELINE BRIGGS The Lamp, the Ice, and the Boat Called Fish: Based on a True Story; illus. by Beth Krommes. Houghton, 2001 [48p]
ISBN 0-618-00341-X $15.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-5

Trapped and drifting amid the ice floes, the 1913 Canadian Arctic Expedition aboard the Karluk may well have been doomed, save for the resilience of her crew and the particular resourcefulness of the Inupiat who were hired as provisioners and guides. In poetic style reminiscent of Burleigh’s Black Whiteness (BCCB 2/98), Martin recounts their frigid adventures as circumstances slip from bad to worse: the expedition leader is separated from the crew; the icebound Karluk is pierced through the hull; the crew sets up and then must abandon Camp Shipwreck; a trek across sea ice brings them to Wrangel Island, where near-starvation awaits. Focus on the Inupiat’s contribution to the party results in a wealth of fascinating detail concerning native strategies for Arctic survival, from iglu construction, to fishing and hunting techniques, to clothing materials and design. The formal, almost dispassionate narrative refashions flesh and blood travails into an epic saga suitable for reciting to descendants: “[Kurruluk] was a hunter and would not quit./ When he had no more bullets for his gun/ he practiced throwing sticks./ He brought thirty crowbills down with his stick./ He caught birds with a net.” Broken into chapters, this could make a fine readaloud, although Krommes’ finely detailed scratchboard and watercolor scenes, rendered in deep golds, browns, and moss greens and texturized with intricate hatching, invite close, individual inspection. Final notes tell the fate of the passengers, crew, and animals aboard the Karluk, and a trio of photographs close the book with the moving reminder that this was a true-life adventure. A brief bibliography and author’s note appears on the copyright page. EB

MCBRIER, PAGE Beatrice’s Goat; illus. by Lori Lohstoeter. Schwartz/Atheneum, 2001 33p
ISBN 0-689-82460-2 $16.00 R 5-8 yrs

Beatrice, a young girl in western Uganda, wishes she could join the children who attend a nearby school; with barely enough resources to survive, her family is unable to afford the uniform and books to make this possible. Her mother happily announces the household will be one of twelve families to receive a goat, but as
they build a shed and plant fodder Beatrice cannot imagine just how the coming goat will change their fortunes. Mugisa ("luck"), the nanny goat, is every bit the blessing they hoped—she gives birth to twins (one of which will be sold to a neighboring family) and provides milk for nourishment and additional income, and that income in turn provides them with a sturdier house and, best of all, Beatrice's education. Lohstoeter's heavily brushed acrylic paintings ably convey the locale, but Mugisa is too, too cute and Beatrice's baby sibling, who stares coyly off the pages, is too, too precious. An afterword introduces Heifer Project International, the organization that brings "resources, training, and community support" to families such as Beatrice's. Only a hint of Western self-congratulation invades the text ("Some kindhearted people from far away have given us a lucky gift"); the clear emphasis here is on self-help within family and community. Beatrice's tale is a fine vehicle for helping children discern the difference between charity and justice. EB

Meister, Cari  
*Busy Busy City Street*; illus. by Steven Guarnaccia.  
Viking, 2000 26p  
Ad 3-5 yrs

Meister constructs a cacophony of car horns, traffic noises, and sirens in this rhyme about the exhilarating music of city traffic. Meister's text has a good readaloud bounce ("Honk honk, Beep beep! Busy, busy city street.// Siren sounds, fire call.// Taxi jam, traffic stall"), but there is surprisingly little in-text action. Guarnaccia's illustrations provide the spice in this slice of urban life, from the peripatetic pedestrians to the slick automobiles to the graphically enhanced, hand-lettered text. Guarnaccia's characters look like the denizens of Nickelodeon's *Doug* cartoon, with expressive dot-eyed faces in varying skin tones of blue, green, and purple; the urban milieu is characterized by silhouetted skylines against a sky that changes color from spread to spread. The retro palette is big on olive green, burnt orange, and Delft blue, and the text itself changes size and shape and color with each spread, taking up more and more space, becoming more and more integrated with the images until it is no longer text at all but part of the overall book design. The ending of this otherwise visually exciting title (after page after page of aural intensity, the story ends: "Honk! Honk! Beep! Beep!// Busy, busy city street.// School's out, buses run.// Heading home, one by one") is disappointing. There is no closing cacophony, just kids running up their front steps to be greeted by an apparent parent. While the "beep beep"s will make listeners happy, it's the snazzy deco-ish art that makes this book shine. JMD

Montgomery, Sy  
The Man-Eating Tigers of Sundarbans; illus. with photographs by Eleanor Briggs.  
Houghton, 2001 [57p]  
ISBN 0-618-07704-9 $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad Gr. 4-6

Montgomery (*The Snake Scientist*, BCCB 5/99) visits the flooded mangrove forest of Sundarbans, India, to investigate the anomalous habits of the man-eating tigers that inhabit it. The author introduces readers to the geography of India and the ecology of Sundarbans, gives a brief overview of tiger behavior (which does not generally include attacking people unless the tiger is injured or sick), discusses the man-eating habits of the tigers of Sundarbans, and puts forth some possible explanations for their unusual behavior. The text sometimes strays into the fulsome (the author addresses the reader directly, with many an interrogatory and/or ex-
clamatory remark), and there is a whiff of exotica in the descriptions of the indigenous peoples and their beliefs (reinforced by the “Let’s Speak Bengali” addendum). The writing is hampered by clumsy sentence structure and interjections about the scientific method (“All of these are ideas, not answers. Scientists call such ideas hypotheses. Which ones seem most likely to you?”) that interrupt the flow of the narrative. The momentum is dissipated among assorted worthy topics, and the multi-thread approach detracts from the main point of interest: the tigers. Briggs’ color photographs of this protected sanctuary and its wildlife, while occasionally blurry, go a long way toward maintaining the pace of this wide-ranging photoessay. An index, brief bibliography, and a list of pro-tiger organizations are included. JMD

NAGDA, ANN WHITEHEAD  Dear Whiskers; illus. by Stephanie Roth. Holiday House, 2000  76p ISBN 0-8234-1495-7  $15.95  R  Gr. 2-4

Fourth-grader Jenny is not at all thrilled about the pen-pal project her class is doing with a second-grade class. She is not thrilled about pretending to be a mouse writing letters, and she is especially not thrilled with her pen pal, Sameera. Sameera, recently moved to the United States from Saudi Arabia, is new to the school and to the country; her spoken English is very sketchy and her written English is nearly nonexistent. Encouraged by her teacher, Jenny (as Whiskers, the mouse) keeps writing letters to Sameera; she also reads to Sameera every day but still can’t seem to connect with her. A story using mouse-shaped sugar cookies is the breakthrough—Sameera responds with enthusiastic interest, and so does the rest of the class (nothing like a few cookies to make everyone friendly). Success is not instantaneous, and the struggle is realistic: Jenny is reluctant to help Sameera but she agrees to do so because her favorite teacher asks her to; Sameera is not some angelic little sprite, but an intelligent, frustrated child, and her heart is not won easily. Adult characters are a solid presence here, from the teacher who coaxes Jenny towards success, to Jenny’s mother, who helps her bake mouse-shaped cookies. Jenny is a terrific average-kid protagonist, and her character development over time is convincingly portrayed. Even peripheral characters have that critical dash of detail that makes them stand out as individuals no matter how short their page-time may be. Roth’s black-and-white wash drawings (full-page, half-page, and spot art) feature genial characters in a friendly, unthreatening classroom landscape. JMD

PALATINI, MARGIE  The Web Files; illus. by Richard Egielski. Hyperion, 2001  [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  6-9 yrs

Ducktective Web and his poultry partner are on the move in search of a stealer of vegetables: a hen’s been robbed of a peck of purple peppers, some horses have been relieved of a tub of tartest tasty tomatoes, and a sheep’s lost a load of luscious leafy lettuce. Web’s keen instincts lead him to the lair of the Dirty Rat, who proves to have just consumed his purloined salad. The genre references (Palatini doesn’t just stick to her model, Dragnet, but adds in a few other allusions, ranging from Casablanca to Gershwin) are amusing, and the book entertainingly echoes
the TV show's deadpan narration while adding some diverting nursery-rhyme connections (Little Boy Blue is the partners' first suspect). The amusement is almost all for adult benefit, however, as few primary graders will be up on the mid-century cultural sources (and they may be disappointed by the title's false suggestion of an X-Files connection); they'll probably have heard the familiar "DUM DE DUM DUM" refrain, but they're going to weary of its frequent repetition here. Egielski's illustrations depict a slightly baroque urbanized farmscape, with horses zipping by on bicycles and canines as beat cops; the clean outlines and scrubbed textures give the scene a toylike flavor. The audience will appreciate entertaining details, such as the mouse driving the milk route and the robbed hen sitting dejectedly on her egg, but there are opportunities missed here as well: though the rat's tail offers a clue to the first robbery, there's no sign of him at the other two, and the IDs aren't clear on some of the nursery-rhyme victims in the police station. The youngest pop-culture mavens may approve of this, but most youngsters looking for anthropomorphized animal hijinks will be better off with Cronin's Click, Clack, Moo (BCCB 9/00). DS


A long drought drives a widowed Chinese mother to the end of her resources, and she scrounges together her few remaining gold coins to send her son, Jo Lee, to fish with Fourth Uncle in California, the "Golden Mountain." Desolate at their parting, seasick on his journey, and homesick upon his arrival, Jo Lee finds everything about the new land disconcerting, from the strange appearance of the blue-eyed, yellow-haired foreigners, to his uncle's silence, to the arduous nature of the work. Sometimes when he's at rest, the boy's Hun, or dream spirit, looses itself from his body and travels to China, where it attempts to comfort and encourage his mother. When at last the Hun brings the scent of orange blossoms from the trees Jo Lee planted on Golden Mountain, his mother senses that their fortunes have turned. Partridge avoids overt pathos but nonetheless weaves a bittersweet and deeply touching tale in which the ethereal aspects of Jo Lee's spirit flights delicately balance the myriad details of life in a late nineteenth-century Chinese-American fishing village. Intricate collages in Japanese hand-cut-paper style cast the California coast into an Eastern visual idiom, and although Sogabe's figures are a bit too doll-like for Partridge's stately, folkloric prose, their spare features are remarkably expressive. An afterword comments on Chinese sojourners' experiences prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act and on the five spirits (particularly the Hun); for additional information, readers are referred to Partridge's website. EB


Josh resents his relocation from Virginia to Vermont, where the local kids aren't exactly welcoming, and he's not too crazy about his new stepfather and baby half-brother, either. He's considerably more interested in the discovery he makes about his dog, Manch, and Manch's canine pals: when they think people aren't around,
they talk. Josh therefore has inside knowledge about Manch's pack's battles with a local canine gang, and when Manch is hurt, Josh finds an ally in a formerly threatening classmate. The text and art here first appeared as a newspaper serial, and the narrative is less effective as a book: the multiple subthreads are forcibly tied together and there's no overall sense of pace (and the plot really doesn't need the talking dogs at all). Paterson is as usual a skillful stylist, however, giving understated but eloquent voice to Josh's various anxieties, and salutary lessons range from the need to give people a chance to the importance of gun safety. The simplicity of the writing will invite young readers, but it's also worth taking advantage of the series pacing by turning it into a chapter-by-chapter readaloud. McCully's rumpled, easygoing line drawings add a homey view of the snowy Vermont countryside. DS


*National Velvet* got quite a bit of mileage from its headstrong young girl with ambitions for the Grand National despite her unprepossessing horse; for Peyton, however, that's just the surface of this sprawling story about Tessa and her beloved horse, Buffoon. Tessa first meets Buffoon when she's twelve and she's been kicked out of school for the third time, whereupon her nasty stepfather, Maurice, sends her off as free labor to a local racehorse trainer. She connects with Buffoon (apparently bred by her long-gone Irish father), who does indeed race in the Grand National (though under a talented professional jockey, Tom Bryant); Maurice queers Buffoon's chances, however, so that his own horse will win, and the now-sixteen-year-old Tessa stabs him in a rage. After two years' incarceration, Tessa (with the aid of Tom Bryant) returns to the trainer's stables and seeks to bring a run-down Buffoon back to his peak and win the race he was deprived of before. There's plenty more plot where this came from, as the book is reminiscent of a miniseries in its melodramatic eventfulness. Though the human events begin to pile up almost humorously (there are tossed-in developments about Tessa's love for Tom, her mother's abandonment of Tessa's stepfather for Tessa's boss, and a few other elements beside), the core girl-and-her-horse story has a blend of solidity, with its homely barn details, and fantasy that will appeal to horsey readers. Peyton's writing is as ungainly as Buffoon's running, with messy sentences and a tendency to tell rather than show; even if it's not a Grand National winner, however, the book resembles Buffoon in pulling itself together for an enjoyable gallop, and kids with their own soapy equestrian dreams may find it a satisfying addition to their literary stable. DS

ROBERTS, WILLO DAVIS *Buddy Is a Stupid Name for a Girl.* Atheneum, 2001 [224p] ISBN 0-689-81670-7 $16.00 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

Amy Kate (Buddy) finds herself in the care of her brother Bart when her father tries to make a go of it as a truck driver. When he doesn't return as promised, the kids are evicted, and Bart sends Buddy to stay with relatives while he searches for their father. As Buddy attempts to acclimate to life in her late mother's childhood home, her uncanny resemblance to her mother, EllaBelle, stirs old family wounds.
While Aunt Cassie would like to forget the past, Aunt Addie has more difficulty letting go, providing opportunity for Buddy to learn of their grievance against her mother: Addie first loved Buddy's father before EllaBelle swept him away, and EllaBelle was the person last seen with the flowered tote containing Buddy's great-grandfather's fortune. Just as brother Bart will not believe their father hijacked a semi-truck filled with valuable inventory (as the trucking company believes), Buddy is unable to believe her mother would steal, and each sibling seeks the truth. Roberts’ story rides on Buddy’s predictable idealism and pluck and on a sequence of plot contrivances (the siblings’ eviction, for instance, means they weren’t home for their father’s only phone call). However, Buddy’s successful sleuthing (her mother’s name is cleared and the money returned to its rightful owners) will appeal to youngsters, who will identify with the kid solving a mystery and working towards a cause in which no one else believes. EAB


George finds an enormous egg in the hen house and takes it in to his bedroom to keep it warm. The egg, which is as tall as the bed is long, soon hatches a dragon, and George proceeds to teach the dragon “dragony ways,” as shown in comical illustrations of near misses during flying lessons, roasting hot dogs by dragon fire, and instruction in distressing a neighborhood damsel. Eventually the dragon longs for the companionship of other dragons and so disappears in the night, returning one week later to take George to meet his dragon friends. The dragon brings George home again, departing on a sentimental note (“George didn’t speak Dragon, but he knew exactly what the dragon had said: “Thank you””). Although many of the elements of familiar picture-book fantasies are present, there is little in the way of character development or emotional engagement to truly endear this story to young dragon aficionados, and there is scant tension in the plot beyond the surprise of the initial hatching. The illustrations are engaging and humorous, however, showing George in a tree with a colander tied upside down over his head as a knight’s helmet, or George dangling from the claws of the flying dragon, glasses falling in one direction and garbage can lid shield falling in the other. Although many young viewers will be more satisfied with a visit to the classic My Father’s Dragon, some dragon aficionados may find fodder for their flying reptilian fantasies here. KM


Each of these two tales features an episode in the life of Bonnie Bumble, a young girl taking care of the animals on a farm. In Foggy Friday, the rooster loses his voice, but his characteristic crow appears in the voices of the other animals (“OINK-A-OODLE-OO” and “MOO-A-MOODLE-MOO”). After a search, Bonnie finds the rooster’s crow in the form of a word balloon draped over the clothesline and restores it to its rightful owner. The cockerel then wakes the farm up while a
sleepy Bonnie goes back to bed, saying “SNORE-A-SNOODLE-SNOO!” The magical logic of the story may not appeal to all young listeners, but the simple language and amusing refrains will engage storytime participants. In the more contrived *Meow Monday*, Bonnie’s pussy willows have burst into bloom, sprouting noisily meowing felines from the end of each branch, and Bonnie discovers that she can placate the pussy willows by harvesting the bottles of milk from the milkweed plant. All’s well on the farm until, in the last spread, the dogwoods (with eager canine faces and front paws emerging from the flowers) burst into bloom. Young children may not understand the joke, but they might nevertheless enjoy watching Bonnie’s attempts to maintain order on the farm. Although facial expressions are repetitive and the pictures often merely sweet, the illustrations present barnyard and outdoor scenes with simple cartoonish lines and softly textured blocks of color that will appeal to younger viewers. Preschool listeners and beginning readers will appreciate these simple giggle-inducing stories. KM

**Shepard, Aaron, ad.** Master Man; illus. by David Wisniewski. HarperCollins, 2001 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13784-9 $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13783-0 $15.95

In this retelling of a Hausa tale, Shadusa, a man who calls himself Master Man because he is so strong, finds that he is unable to pull a heavy bucket up from the well. A woman at the well insists that her baby try, and, when the baby easily pulls up the bucket, Shadusa is shocked; the woman says he shouldn’t be—her husband is Master Man. Infuriated that another man dare use his nickname, Shadusa goes home with the woman to “teach that fellow a lesson.” As he approaches the hut, Shadusa sees great piles of bones, which the woman says are the bones of the elephants her husband eats. The earth shakes as Master Man comes home, carrying a dead elephant on his shoulders. Shadusa tries to run away, but Master Man sees him and chases him, until Master Man runs into another giant man who also calls himself Master Man, and the two begin to wrestle. The cut-paper illustration shows the forms of the two wrestling men becoming the gray clouds of a thunderstorm, and the text explains that the sound of their wrestling is the noise we call thunder. Wisniewski’s illustrations blend his trademark paper collage with conventions from comic books, including multiple frames on some pages, word balloons, and enlarged onomatopoetic words (Master Man’s angry “ROAR” takes up nearly half a page). The modern language of Shepard’s text (Shadusa says, “You weren’t fooling. I’ve got to get out of here!”) complements the comic book format, retelling this Hausa tale from Nigeria as an action adventure. Shepard and Wisniewski have created a book with wide appeal, and, although the pictures are too detailed for storytimes, reluctant readers will take this title by storm. KM

**Smith, Charles R., Jr.** Short Takes: Fast-Break Basketball Poetry; written and illus. with photographs by Charles R. Smith, Jr. Dutton, 2001 32p

With characteristic energy, Smith continues his foray into basketball literature. Moving from his blend of poetry and prose in *Rimshots* (BCCB 5/99) and his short-story focus in *Tall Tales* (BCCB 5/00), he here concentrates on poetry, with mixed results. There are gems such as “Buckets of points are piling up quick/ the court is now soaked and the asphalt is slick./ The Rainmaker’s shower has left...
and all this was done without breaking a sweat” (“The Rainmaker”) and “Sneakers squeak on floors/ made of teak, but asphalt has/ a sound all its own” (“Haiku #3”). Other entries, like the forcibly rhymed “Shadow Dancing,” work less well on the page (“Shadows dance and prance/ in the trance/ of my opponent in the defensive stance”). Though the poetry is uneven, Smith nonetheless captures the essence of basketball in words and images. Each spread features a single poem set against a vibrantly colored background, with Smith’s photographs echoing the sounds of the text, creating visual rhythm and energy through perspective and dynamic layout. This will please sports aficionados who can’t wait for recess as well as prompting classroom experiments with language and book design. A short glossary is included.


Mary, Mabel, and Molly, sisters on a sundrenched, early twentieth century farm, agree that “what this place needs is a tree,” and with their father’s permission they take the wagon to the creek to hunt for a good prospect. They settle upon a spindly young elm, which they carefully transplant and tend until it grows into a robust supporter of swings and provider of shade that plays its quiet roles throughout the gradual evolution of their lives. Disease eventually claims the tree, and the now white-haired siblings try to focus on good memories rather than loss, but it’s only when Molly’s three great-granddaughters plant a new elm in its place that their humor is truly restored: “We’ve seen many good days,” they agreed, “but this is one of the best.” This cycle-of-life tale is drawn in a broad outline with only a few brief allusions to the sisters’ landmark events marking the passage of time, and although the sisters age at a believable rate, the tree comes into maturity sooner than is naturally possible. Single and double-page oil paintings sport a shallow perspective that should recall primitive folk art, but in this case simply looks flat. Still, the tender bond between family and tree comes across clearly, and Arbor Day presentations could incorporate just such a title. EB

Soto, Gary Jessie De La Cruz: A Profile of a United Farm Worker.  Braziller/Persea, 2000  116p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-89255-253-0 $17.95  Ad  Gr. 7-10

Author Soto first met Jessie De La Cruz in 1998. He was struck by the good-humored, self-possessed woman, and, short months later, he found himself writing her biography. De La Cruz was an active participant in recruiting workers for the United Farm Workers Association, whose experience as a migrant worker made her passionate about the organization that would make life better for her children and grandchildren. Soto tells De La Cruz’ story from working childhood to active old age, painting a bleak picture of the physical hardship, racism, and abuse she and other nearly powerless workers suffered. The arrival of Cesar Chavez altered her future; she found herself rising to the challenge of changing her own life and the lives of her fellow workers. Soto’s somewhat formal style reflects a great deal of respect for his subject, but the stolid, textbooky explication contributes to a sense of distance between the reader and De La Cruz. Fortunately, the events of De La Cruz’ life are intriguing in themselves, and her tough compassion and ready humor comes through time and again. Quotes from De La Cruz herself, and quotes
about De La Cruz from her friends and family, spark this woman to life. Soto
draws his information from personal interviews with De La Cruz, and primary and
secondary sources about the United Farm Workers movement. Much of De La
Cruz' adult life revolved around La Causa; readers may find themselves wondering
what cause would matter as much to them. JMD

TANAKA, SHELLEY  In the Time of the Knights; illus. by Greg Ruhl.  Hyperion/

The life of twelfth-century figure William Marshal is the lens through which Tanaka
examines medieval knighthood, and a rousing life it is. She opens with a riveting
scene of young William taken hostage by King Stephen and abandoned by his
father ("Your father claims he can make more sons, and better ones, to take your
place"), notes his training in the household of cousin William de Tancarville ("He
hated sitting indoors hunched over black scratchings on a page. What good would
reading and writing be to him on the battlefield?"); and covers his early success in
war and impoverishment (through the medieval version of downsizing) in peace.
Brought back into his cousin's favor, William catches the attention of royalty and
rises to become protector/mentor of a prince and, eventually, regent during the
early reign of Henry III. There's plenty of bloodshed and court intrigue along the
way, and extensive insets contrast the formal, almost genteel picture of knight-
hood that has come down through romanticized tradition with the rough and
tumble reality of Marshal's lot. Tight focus and engaging storytelling make this
one of the stronger entries in the "I Was There" series, and although Ruhl's pedes-
trian single-page paintings contribute little to the effort, plenty of credited ex-
amples of medieval artwork and color photos of historic sites provide a grand visual
tour. EB

TOOINSKY, IZZI, ad.  The Turkey Prince; illus. by Edwina White.  Viking,

When the pressures of princely life become too pressing, the unnamed prince of
this tale throws off his royal clothes and takes refuge under a kitchen table, making
gobbling noises like a turkey. Many healers try to cure him and fail, until a wise
man comes to the prince, throws off his clothes, and joins him beneath the table,
telling the prince that he is also a turkey. The wise man slowly coaxes the prince to
return to human habits ("Could a turkey who is cold wear a coat? Of course, why
not?"). Once the prince rejoins human life, he goes on to be a just ruler, despite
believing he is a turkey; the book concludes with the prince helping one of his
young subjects who is convinced he is a turkey, just as the wise man once helped
him. Aside from one awkward interruption (a parenthetical explanation of the
prince's motivation for thinking he's a turkey), Tooinsky's retelling is evenly told
and well paced, if somewhat lacking in humor. White's illustrations feature black
ink outlines against jewel-tone paints, with the occasional use of collaged paper.
Figures are drawn in stylistically simple lines, and the minimalist faces have pre-
dominantly flat and expressionless features that limit emotional involvement. There
is no source note, and the jacket flap says this is an "old Hassidic tale" (it was in
fact written in the nineteenth century by famous Jewish storyteller Rabbi Nachman
of Bratslav). The situation has its own amusement value, however, and listeners
will appreciate the message of compassion just beneath the feathers. KM
TURNER, ANN  *Abe Lincoln Remembers*; illus. by Wendell Minor.  HarperCollins, 2001  32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027578-2  $15.89  M Gr. 2-5
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027577-4  $15.95

In a throwback to the hero-worship history of the 1950s, Turner presents an adulatory overview of Lincoln's life, abbreviated, underexamined, and awash in sentiment. Here readers find the rail splitter in all his homespun glory—practicing his numbers "on the back of the fire shovel"; whuppin' Jack Armstrong, "the best wrestler around"; honing his oratory, "learning how to use words like a leading rein on a colt to take people where I wanted." The Civil War is dispatched in four spreads, tidily summed up in the reflection, "Finally our side has won, the country is not divided, and the slaves are free," and on a closing note of dramatic irony, Lincoln and wife Mary are off to see a play. Minor's paintings are creakily stiff and sometimes blatantly sentimental. Angular sunbeams rise in benediction over Lincoln's childhood log cabin; Lincoln and Mary Todd exchange moony glances in front of an enormous American flag. A closing note fills in some of the historical gaps, but even here Turner slips in the notoriously erroneous claim, "Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, officially freeing all the slaves." Young students have become accustomed to more balanced views of even the most heroic statesmen, and this well-intentioned portrayal comes up short. EB

VANDE VELDE, VIVIAN  *The Rumpelstiltskin Problem*.  Houghton, 2000  116p
ISBN 0-618-05523-1  $15.00  R Gr. 5-8

The tale of the strange being who spins straw into gold (despite some motivation problems on the parts of its characters) has held readers' and listeners' imaginations over many years. Vande Velde clearly states her position on the plot of "Rumpelstiltskin": "It makes no sense." Her effort to rectify this problem results in six variations on the Grimms' story, most funny, all accessible, and each quite witty in its own right. In "A Fairy Tale in Bad Taste," Rumpelstiltskin is a troll with a taste for human babies ("kiddie cutlets") who tricks the miller's daughter with Machiavellian glee, only to have his own appetite betray him in the end. "The Domovoi" is a house-spirit who cannot bear unhappiness in his abode and feels obliged to remedy it; "Ms. Rumpelstiltskin" is an old woman who knows she'd be a better mother than the queen. Succinct characterizations focus each tale. The miller's daughter especially comes into her own in Vande Velde's variations: not only does she get a name in each story, but she gets motivation and personality. Her personas range from a clever young woman coping with her flighty father to a gold-digging con artist with an eye on the crown. The author speaks directly to the reader in an informal style that is almost casually clever; the humor comes more from understatement than slapstick. Present this along with the traditional Grimms' tale for an adventure in alternative universes. JMD

WILES, DEBORAH  *Freedom Summer*; illus. by Jerome Lagarrigue.  Schwartz/Atheneum, 2001  32p
ISBN 0-689-83016-5  $16.00  Ad 5-8 yrs

Set in the summer of 1964 in the American south, this picture book presents two best friends, one black and one white, who come up against the lingering legacy of racism despite the mandates of the new Civil Rights Act. Joe is the son of a middle-class white family, and his best friend John Henry is the son of the black house-
keeper who works for Joe’s mother. Told from Joe’s perspective, the narrative describes the summertime pleasures of friendship, from swimming in the creek to eating ice pops that Joe buys for them both, since John Henry is not allowed in the general store. One night at dinner, Joe’s father announces that the town pool will be opening to everyone, regardless of skin color, the following morning. The two boys race to the pool in the morning only to find that county dump trucks are filling the pool with asphalt. Despite their disappointment, and despite the prohibition on doing so, the boys decide to buy ice pops at the general store together. The childish ease with which the two boys walk into the store is jarringly at odds with not only the detailed descriptions of racist restrictions throughout the text but also with the scene just before, showing that whites in the town were willing to destroy the town pool rather than include black people. Figures in the illustrations are blocky, with moments of awkward drafting, and the use of blurred oil paints adds a nostalgic softness that, along with sentimental moments in the text, makes this story seem more filtered through adult memories than told from a child’s perspective. This joins other recent historical fiction picture books about similar experiences of children challenging segregation (Woodson’s *The Other Side*, this month’s Big Picture, Coleman’s *White Socks Only*, 4/96), and despite its message-driven earnestness, it may inspire valuable discussions about race, racism, and the ways that young people try to change the world around them. KM

**Williams, Laura E.** *Up a Creek.* Holt, 2001 135p ISBN 0-8050-6453-2 $15.95 Ad Gr. 5-7

Starshine Bott’s mother, Miracle, is a dyed-in-the-wool activist who flits from cause to cause with unabated passion. To date Starshine has been resigned, tolerant, or even cautiously supportive of Miracle’s crusades. However, in this, her eighth-grade year, she is particularly sensitive to her mother’s latest “save the oaks” campaign, a hometown anti-development issue that attracts more than local interest when Miracle “moves into” one of the threatened trees and refuses to come down until the developer backs off. Nothing, it seems, will bring Miracle down—not her own mother’s hospitalization from heat exhaustion, not Starshine’s pleas for support when she gets her first period. It’s only when a very angry Starshine starts to ask probing questions concerning the identity of her biological father that Miracle recognizes a family cause could be as important as a community issue. Would that all adolescents were as forgiving of an offending parent as Starshine, who not only abandons her bitterness with remarkable ease but even drops all interest in her mystery father as soon as Miracle touches ground. A conclusion that finds Starshine and her classmates up in trees provides dramatic flourish but simply fails to ring with truth. Still, plenty of middle schoolers suffer from acute parental embarrassment, and Starshine is sure to find her share of sympathizers. EB

**Williams-Garcia, Rita** *Every Time a Rainbow Dies.* HarperCollins, 2001 [176p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029202-4 $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16245-2 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

Since the death of his mother, sixteen-year-old Thulani has essentially cared only for his rooftop pigeons, but one day from his rooftop he witnesses a girl being raped. He’s too late to avert the crime, but he does chase off her attackers and walk...
the hurt and furious girl home, and by then he's obsessed. While he's briefly diverted by dating another girl, it's still the girl whose beautiful skirt he's kept as an icon who haunts him, whom he follows, and whom he finally manages to talk to. The girl, Ysa, proves to be a young woman of determination and drive, whose artistic ambitions (she's a budding fashion designer) challenge Thulani's aimlessness, and it's clear even when they become lovers that there's a future drawing her away from him. Williams-Garcia (author of <i>Like Sisters on the Homefront</i>, BCCB 9/95) writes an eloquent and offbeat story of love and awakening, grief and recovery. Her narration gives the outwardly often-bumbling Thulani an articulateness that will allow readers to empathize with his grief, his frustration (his brother and sister-in-law, with whom he lives, don't know what to make of him and plan to use his inheritance for their own purposes), and his passion for Ysa and what she stands for. Ysa's strength in the face of her tragedies is believable (in a life marked early by sadness, she survived a boat trip from Haiti when her parents did not), as is Thulani's growth in response as he finds a possible calling himself (photography), comes to terms with his mother's death, and plans to return to Jamaica where she died and where his father still lives. This may not suit readers searching for a traditional romance, but many teens will be moved by this lyrical account of Thulani's love and growth.

**WITTLINGER, ELLEN**  
<i>Gracie's Girl</i>. Simon, 2000 186p  
ISBN 0-689-82249-9 $16.00 R Gr. 4-7

Sixth-grader Bess usually tries to avoid the soup kitchen where her social worker mother spends an increasing number of hours. Circumstances find Bess spending time there, however, and she is struck by Gracie Jarvis Battles, an old woman without home or kin, who reminds Bess of her own grandmother. Bess and her best friend, Ethan, and later even her older brother, Willy, bring food to Gracie and sneak her into an old storage shack on the school grounds so she can be out of the elements. Meanwhile, Bess' mother is working with a community group to get a hotel refurbished as a shelter for women before winter sets in. Bess herself is overextended: she's stage-managing the school production of <i>Bye Bye Birdie</i>, trying to create a popular image, dealing with her first crush, and playing Cupid for Willy. Eloquent characterizations help keep all these plot threads untangled and smooth. Bess is a believable narrator, and her observations about the people and activities that surround her ring with the emotional truth of a young adolescent. The author avoids sentimentalizing the homeless for the most part, and she creates in Gracie a character of pathos and tragedy. Bess' mother and father are a little too good to be true, but that's a nice change from the usual dysfunctional parental grouping. It is difficult to tackle this topic in fiction without self-conscious soapboxing, but Wittlinger avoids the obvious pitfalls by concentrating on individuals instead of causes. JMD

**WONG, JANET S.**  
<i>Grump</i>; illus. by John Wallace. McElderry, 2001 26p  
ISBN 0-689-83485-3 $16.00 Ad 2-4 yrs

Wong focuses on a mother's long day: "Look how tired this Mommy is/ Tired and frumpy/ Grouchy chumpy/ Oh, what a grump!" "Smart, good Baby" may be happy, but he makes messes with abandon and then refuses to go to sleep: "Baby's eyes are getting heavy/ Heavy sleepy baby eyes/ Mommy starts to tiptoes out—/ And oh of course that baby cries . . . <i>Play with me!</i>" Wong's minimal text (in tasteful baby blue) neatly accents Wallace's sparse line and watercolor illustrations,
both floating on a sea of white space in an attractive layout. Unfortunately, the expressions often don't synchronize with the text, and there's frequent visual repetition, dulling the impact of the art. Families will be familiar with this scenario, but since Wong writes for knowing adults, it is doubtful most toddlers will last past the first pages. For a more involving title addressing the shared grumpiness of parent and child, try Betsy Everitt's *Mean Soup*. EAB

See this month's Big Picture, p. 211, for review.

Reviewed from galleys  
Yin distills the experiences of a host of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants into this fictionalized story of two impoverished Cantonese brothers who sail to America to work on the Transcontinental Railroad. Each event in their lives—from seasickness, to setting dynamite charges, to abandoning a labor action, to surviving (miraculously) an avalanche—seems self-consciously drawn from a history text and cobbled into a single tale. Sandwiching the brothers' story between opening and closing scenes of their descendants celebrating the Ching Ming Festival (which an afterword explains as a day "Chinese families pay respect to their ancestors") adds little. Soentpiet's dignified, near-sculptural articulation of the two brothers deftly assures they are never lost in the crowd of workers among whom they are generally portrayed; the persistent yellow-orange illumination in which most scenes are bathed may, however, send viewers running for their Ray-Bans. Consider this title for introducing the facts, but turn to Partridge's *Oranges on Golden Mountain* (reviewed above) for the feel. EB

Reviewed from galleys  
The brother-and-sister pair in this piece of reverse psychology are well aware of what sort of manners are expected of them when they're grown up: be polite, say please and thank-you, knock before entering, use a napkin at meals, etc. While the kids' narration talks about what they'll do when they're grown, the cartoon panels tell a different story, showing the behavior the children currently indulge in—throwing liver to the dog, letting the door swing back in someone's face, pushing to the front of lines, screaming, yelling, shouting—because "for now, we're just kids!" Demarest does his best to lend cachet to the boorish duo, and his watercolors have a polished flair that enlivens their quickly predictable progression. Articulate facial expressions and self-satisfied body language characterize sister and brother as they blithely and smugly defy conventional mores. Demarest's art buoy this corny title right up until the final page, when the "we're just kids" excuse hits an anticlimactic wall. Still, for grownups who have tried conventional etiquette books, this may just fill the bill. JMD

Graham wrote this unique articulation of Bible stories in 1946, after a sojourn as a missionary in Liberia. The author retold these tales in "the idiom of the West African narrative," in "the vernacular of those who have been under the influence of European civilization." The result is storytelling that sings from the page in language that can only be fully appreciated when read aloud: "Long time past/ Before you papa live/ Before him papa live/ Before him pa's papa live—// Long time past/ Before them big tree live/ before them big tree's papa live—/ That time God live." The rhythms of Graham's poetry bring twenty-four familiar tales to exuberant life, including the return of the Prodigal Son ("Hongry Catch the Foolish Boy"), the battle between David and Goliath ("David He No Fear"), the death of Absalom ("Don't Nobody Sing"), and the love of Ruth for Naomi ("Good in She Heart"). The sober palette of the volume—black block prints on stark pages, with pearl-gray botanical swirls on white cover and endpapers—belie the joyous content even as it suggests an appropriate sense of formality and import. Each full-page illustration is surrounded by a wide white border, as if matted and framed; small elegant woodcuts detail the closings of various stories. The sophisticated design of this volume is aimed at adult readers rather than children, and professionals will be glad to have a chance to lay their hands on this significant text for their historical and research collections. It'll also make a rich source for readalouds, however, and some youngsters encouraged by the musical language may want to read further on their own. JMD


The third edition of this useful guide features a Scheherezadian collection of 1001 annotated titles divided into six sections (wordless books, picture books, story books, early reading books, middle reading books, and young adult books). Entries range from classic to contemporary, each entry receiving publication information and award information (where relevant) as well as a concise description. The layout makes the book particularly inviting: wide margins (which the introduction encourages readers to use for notes) are decorated with myriad images from the featured books, and each section's running header features an amusing archetypal example complete with classic "ipsum quo" mock text. The introduction gives a brief overview of the guide and an introduction to selection; multiple indices (title, author, illustrator, age level, and subject) and a bibliography are appended. DS
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.

Abuse-fiction: Klass
Activism-fiction: Williams
African Americans: Borden
African Americans-fiction: Coleman; Littlesugar; Williams-Garcia
African Americans-stories: Wiles; Woodson
Animals: Altman; Holub
Animals-stories: Anderson; Bruss; Cowell; Palatini; Root Foggy
Antarctica: Dewey
Astronauts-stories: Loomis
Aunts-fiction: Ibbotson
Aviation: Borden
Aviation-fiction: Downing
Babies-stories: Cowell; Katz; Wong
Baseball: Isadora
Baseball-fiction: Bennett
Basketball-poetry: Smith
BEDTIME STORIES: Anderson; Child; Katz; Loomis
BIOGRAPHIES: Borden; Marrin; Soto; Tanaka; Turner
Books and reading-stories: Bruss; Child
Brothers and sisters-fiction: Brisson; Roberts; Wittlinger
Brothers-stories: Yin
Bullies-fiction: Laser; Paterson
Cats: Holub
China-stories: Partridge; Yin
Civil rights-fiction: Littlesugar
Civil rights-stories: Wiles; Woodson
Construction-poetry: Johnson
Counseling: Bode
COUNTING BOOKS: Katz
Cows-fiction: Arkin
Crime and criminals-fiction: Klass; Peyton
Crime and criminals-stories: Palatini
Death and dying-fiction: Baskin; Bennett
Detectives-stories: Palatini
Disabilities-fiction: Cummings
Divorce: Bode
Divorce-fiction: Koss
Dogs: Holub
Dogs-fiction: Paterson
Dragons-stories: Robertson
Dreams-stories: Partridge
Ecology: Bang; Montgomery; Williams
ESP-fiction: Chandler
Ethics and values: Beaverson; Cooper; Littlesugar
Families-fiction: Roberts
Families-stories: Jenkins
FANTASY: Arkin; Beaverson; Hanley; Hoffman; Ibbotson; Paterson
Fathers and daughters-fiction: Baskin; Hanley; Roberts
Fathers and sons-fiction: Bennett; Koss
Fathers and sons-stories: DiTerlizzi
Flying-fiction: Downing
FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES: Shepard; Tooinsky; Vande Velde
Food and eating: Altman
Friendship-fiction: Baskin; Hoffman; Wittlinger
Friendship—stories: DiTerlizzi; 
Wiles; Woodson
FUNNY STORIES: Tooinsky
Ghosts: Bial
Grandfathers—fiction: Taylor
Grandmothers—fiction: Chandler
Grandmothers—stories: Sommerdorf
Guns—fiction: Paterson
HISTORICAL FICTION: Crew;
Laser; Littlesugar; Wiles;
Woodson
History, U.S.: Bial; Borden;
Cooper; Johnson; Littlesugar;
Marrin; Partridge; Soto; Turner;
Wiles; Woodson
History, world: Martin; Tanaka
Homeless, the—fiction: Wittlinger
Horses—fiction: Peyton
HUMOR: Grossman
Imaginary friends—stories:
DiTerlizzi
Immigrants—stories: Partridge; Yin
India: Montgomery
Islands—fiction: Ibbotson
Japanese Americans: Cooper
Knights: Tanaka
Latinos: Soto
Libraries—stories: Bruss
LOVE STORIES: Williams-Garcia
Manners—stories: Ziefert
Mermaids—fiction: Hoffman
Middle ages: Tanaka
Moon—stories: Anderson
Mothers—fiction: Baskin
Mothers and daughters—fiction:
Coleman; Williams; Wittlinger
Mothers and sons—fiction: Klass
Mothers and sons—stories: Partridge
Moving—fiction: Paterson
Music and musicians—fiction: Arkin
MYSTERIES: Chandler
Mythical creatures—fiction: Ibbotson
Naps—stories: Wong
Nigeria—folktales: Shepard
Orphans—fiction: Downing
Plants—stories: Root Meow
POETRY: Grossman; Hines;
Johnson; Smith
Pollution: Bang
Poverty—stories: McBrier
Presidents, U.S.: Turner
Princesses—fiction: Hanley
Quilts—poetry: Hines
Rabbits—stories: Loomis
Racism—fiction: Littlesugar
Racism—stories: Wiles; Woodson
Reading aloud: Brisson; Ibbotson;
Paterson; Shepard; Smith; Vande Velde
Reading, easy: Brisson; Holub;
Paterson
Reading, reluctant: Bial; Smith
Reading—stories: Bruss
Religion—fiction: Beaverson; Crew
School—fiction: Brisson; Laser;
Nagda
Science: Altman; Holub; Jackson
Seasons—poetry: Hines
Sexual abuse—fiction: Bennett
Sisters—stories: Sommerdorf
Space—stories: Loomis
Stepfathers—fiction: Paterson
Storytelling: Shepard; Tooinsky;
Vande Velde
Storytime: Anderson; Bruss; Cowell;
Meister; Root
Supernatural—fiction: Chandler
SURVIVAL STORIES: Chandler
Swimming—fiction: Coleman
Tigers: Montgomery
Traffic—stories: Meister
Trees—stories: Sommerdorf
Twins: Jackson
Uganda—stories: McBrier
Unions: Soto
Urban life—stories: Meister
Voyages and travel: Dewey; Martin
War: Marrin
Wolves—stories: Child
Women’s studies: Borden
World War II: Cooper
Zoos: Altman
The Rose and the Beast
Fairy Tales Retold

By Francesca Lia Block

★ “[From ‘Snow White’ to ‘Thumbelina’] nine fairy tales are given shimmering and scary shape in very modern dress with Block’s luminescent prose . . . language like a jeweled sword, glittering as it cuts to the heart. The place of California dreams, desert light, and movieland glitz, her fairy landscape is repopulated with girls who have rose tattoos and remember River Phoenix. Readers will find dark magic here.”
—Starred review / Kirkus Reviews

★ “The darkness of [Block’s] subjects proves the strength of the magic she describes: the transfiguring power of love.”
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**A Year Down Yonder**
By Richard Peck

0-8037-2518-3/$16.99/ages 10 up

★ "15-year-old Mary Alice visits Grandma...while her parents struggle through the recession of 1937...Again, Peck has created a delightful, insightful tale that resounds with a storyteller's wit, humor, and vivid description."

—*School Library Journal* (starred review)*

★ "The same combination of wit, gentleness, and outrageous farce as Peck's Newbery Honor Book, *A Long Way from Chicago* (1999)...As in the first book, much of the fun comes from the larger-than-life characters..."

—*Booklist* (starred review)

★ "In this hilarious and poignant sequel to *A Long Way from Chicago*, Peck once again shows that country life is anything but boring...Like Mary Alice, audience members will breathe a sigh of regret when the eventful year 'down yonder' draws to a close."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Holds the reader's interest throughout...The first-person narrative is infused with rich, colorful language...Year-round fun."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

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