PRODUCT NOTE

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Fifteen untitled poems, handsomely illustrated with photo-realistic paintings, express the feelings of a young Chinese boy from Hong Kong as he adjusts to his new home in New York's Chinatown. What comes through clearly [to readers] is the boy's gradual acceptance of his new home place where daily pleasures can be enjoyed without relinquishing memories of the past. The first-person voice and strong composition of art with vivid colors symbiotically make this boy's personal emotional journey a universal experience.”

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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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Plenty of youth services librarians, parents, and early childhood educators understand the value of a book that will hold the attention of preschoolers, that will connect with them on a personal level, and that won’t condescend to or confuse a young audience. Clara Vulliamy’s *Small* is just such a book. Its child-centered drama speaks directly to little listeners, and while its central focus—a child’s separation from and reunion with a beloved toy (in this case, a diminutive stuffed mouse)—is not a new one in children’s literature, it’s one that definitely bears retelling. Anyone who’s ever tried to take a “blankie” away from a toddler knows that the attachments children forge with comfort objects can be incredibly powerful, and young children will easily understand and respond to the bond that exists between Vulliamy’s young Tom and his stuffed mouse, Small.

Tom is going to stay overnight at Granny’s house for the first time, and, as he packs and repacks his tiny suitcase, he inadvertently leaves Small behind. Unaware at first of Small’s absence, Tom has a delightful time with Granny, but he sadly realizes what has happened when bedtime rolls around. Meanwhile, back at Tom’s house, the forlorn Small can’t sleep without his human companion and so, after climbing out the window and shinnying down the downspout, he bravely sets off to find Tom. Neither rain, nor wind, nor the “dark, dark woods” can stop the timid but determined Small (“He’s cold and tired and scared. But he doesn’t stop”), and he finally arrives at Granny’s house. At the same time, Tom has decided that he must go out to look for Small and, as he nears Granny’s front door, he sees that “there, on the mat below the mail slot . . . is Small!” Sensible adult Granny claims that Small must have been dropped there when Tom first came in; Tom, however, “doesn’t say anything. Tom knows.”

Vulliamy tells her story simply and matter-of-factly, quietly capturing the urgency of the situation, and her description of Tom and Small’s separation and reunion is emotional but not overly sentimental. Adults will see the happy ending coming from a mile away, but young children won’t mind such predictability a bit and will appreciate the reassurance and security provided by the joyful conclusion. Short, succinct sentences and selective repetition of words and phrases (“He’s climbing and tumbling. And the rain pours down. And the howling wind pushes him back”) offer additional stability and structure to Vulliamy’s writing, and her choice of a present-tense narrative voice further supports her young audience, who live very much in the here-and-now.

It’s no coincidence if Vulliamy’s style of illustration brings to mind the work of British author and illustrator Shirley Hughes; she happens to be Vulliamy’s mother. Watercolor spot illustrations (interspersed with lines of text against a creamy background) depict details of Tom’s indoor activities in warm russet and gold tones, while Small’s scenes are tinged with the sunset hues and dark blues of
evening; full-page paintings effectively illustrate Small's nocturnal expedition. In these scenes, Vulliamy utilizes a nighttime palette along with varying perspectives—one dramatic spread uses a slightly overhead view to play up the contrast between the miniature mouse and the towering trees of the woods—to emphasize the vulnerability of poor little pink-eared Small. Given Vulliamy's characters and storyline, her art could have easily tipped into the gooey and gushy, and the doe-eyed Tom is in fact somewhat idealized; overall, however, the homey, comfortable illustrations are more cozy than cutesy. The rumpled, bean-baggy-looking Small is a particularly sympathetic and endearing figure as he runs from an interested cat or struggles with human-sized curbs and a chain-link fence.

Ultimately, it is Vulliamy's childlike point of view (in which only Tom and Small understand what really happened) that ensures Small's success with toddlers and preschoolers. With her words and images, Vulliamy recognizes and validates the feelings of her young audience; she understands and zeroes in on the sorrow that children feel over what adults believe are small losses, as well as the jubilance and relief that we all feel when the rightness of things is restored. Small is just the right choice for a bedtime readaloud or a P.J. storytime at the library where kids bring their best stuffed-animal buddies—just make sure that when the program's over nobody's left behind. (Imprint information appears on p. 298.)

Jeannette M. Hulick, Reviewer

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ADLER, C. S. The No Place Cat. Clarion, 2002 [160p]
ISBN 0-618-09644-2 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-7

Twelve-year-old Tess is tired of living with her orderly father in his orderly house with his orderly new wife, who expects Tess to help around the house and with her young step- and half-siblings. Having had enough of feeling unappreciated and stifled, Tess decides to take a hike, literally, and walk to her mother's condo, where she plans to live permanently. Life with her exuberant mother isn't as easy as Tess had hoped, however: she's lonely much of the time when her mother's out socializing, and Mom refuses to let Tess keep the cat she picked up and bonded with on her two-day trek. While it's clear from the start that author sympathies tilt towards Dad's house and that that's where Tess will end up, the book doesn't make saints out of anybody (Dad really is inclined to be stubborn and rigid) or shake fingers (Mom's kid-unfriendly lifestyle of heavy traveling and heavy dating, the reason she didn't seek custody in the first place, clearly doesn't keep her from loving Tess, just from being the parent her daughter needs). Tess is a lively and somewhat unusual protagonist, prone to making trouble for entertainment's sake, less blind to consequences than largely untroubled by them, and genuinely surprised by her sudden attachment to her unexpected feline companion. Matura-
tion and decision-making stories can be on the heavy-handed side—here's a
nonthreatening and accessible take on the subject to which many youngsters will relate. DS

Reviewed from galleys  R 2-4 yrs

In this perky overview of a young child’s day, toddler Tilly hunts for treasure: “Each morning Tilly’s mom hides Tilly’s breakfast banana somewhere in the kitchen. And Tilly hunts for it... and finds it. ‘My treasure!’ cries Tilly. And she eats it up.” Tilly’s dad hides Tilly’s stuffed rabbit, Tilly’s cat hides herself, Tilly’s mom and dad hide themselves (“But Tilly just hunts for them... and finds them right away. ‘Easy peasy!’ cried Tilly”). Right around bedtime, Tilly hides and her parents hunt for and find her: “‘My treasure!’ cries Tilly’s mom. ‘My treasure, too,’ cries Tilly’s dad. And they cuddle her up.” Ahlberg’s deliciously cozy text has a few minor glitches—the repetitive rhythm wobbles in parts, and the text goes on just a touch too long—but youngsters sitting in loving laps won’t care. Tyler’s line-and-watercolor illustrations are sweetly suitable, and the characterizations of the ebullient Tilly and her slightly rumpled parents keep the images from falling into the overly cutesy. The layout and style of the daily-event vignettes here are very similar to Ahlberg’s books with Janet Ahlberg; the pictures are too small to make this book useful with large groups, but it is certain to be a hit for one-on-one readalouds. JMD

Reviewed from galleys  R 4-7 yrs

A succinct text in brief chapters introduces baby Bubba and his best friend, the hound-dog puppy Beau. Both offspring are the apples of their respective parents’ eyes (a picture of Bubba Senior and Beau’s daddy, Maurice, in the back of Bubba’s pickup howling at the moon in celebration of the births is accompanied by the text “One perfect baby. One perfect hound. And a lot of commotion”). Bubba and Beau become fast friends, even going so far as to share Bubba’s perfect pink blankie. The day Mama Pearl washes the blankie is “a sad day in Bubbaville”—at least until the clean, dry blanket is returned to the also-bathed Bubba and Beau. Appelt’s snappy text is a readaloud romp, and Howard’s equally snappy watercolors provide an offbeat, slyly funny subtext. Uncluttered compositions, a clean pastel palette, solid drafting, and terrifically expressive faces combine with the conversational, cheeky text to make this one clever package. JMD

Reviewed from galleys  Ad 3-5 yrs

An overalled boy attempts to provoke a sourpuss porker into laughter: “Can you make a piggy giggle if you tell a silly riddle?... if you play a little fiddle... if you waddle through a puddle?” As the pig remains unamused, the attempts become more and more outrageous: “Can you make a piggy giggle if you wriggle like a noodle... if you polka with a poodle?” Though the pig doesn’t respond, other
species seem to be entertainable ("A chick might snicker . . . a calf might laugh . . .
a turtle might chortle"). After a plethora of antics, the text suggests a revised method for successful porcine diversion: "He still won't giggle? Then you're much too slow! So let's try it faster. Ready? Go!" This is more a silly and rather overprotracted tongue-twister than a story, but there are promising possibilities for energetic performance. The art is predictable and cartoony rather than imaginative, lacking the spark that might compensate for the limitations of the text, but the spring-colored watercolor and colored pencil spreads create a playful mood. Despite its shortcomings, this is likely to offer storytime success and to encourage your own gaggle of giggles. EAB

**Bolden, Tonya** *Tell All the Children Our Story: Memories and Mementos of Being Young and Black in America.* Abrams, 2002 128p illus. with photographs ISBN 0-8109-4496-0 $24.95 R Gr. 5-9

Neither a comprehensive history nor a cobbled-together scrapbook, Bolden's work is an impressionistic tour through the experiences of black children from colonial times to present, and ultimately an exploration of diversity within black communities over three centuries. Here readers meet freeborn children of privilege and slave children toiling in abject misery, children determined to seize the best educational opportunities at any cost, and children who openly disdain the offer of forced integration ("I did not want to go to school with white people . . . I wanted the right to go anywhere I wished to go. I also wanted the right not to go"). Despite occasional forays into the florid ("Out of the mouths of babes this song ("Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing"), written in one day by James Weldon Johnson, had its debut"), Bolden's prose flows easily and naturally, and the presentation is thoughtful and stimulating. Document insets and high-quality reproductions of artwork and realia suggest how and where to search imaginatively for cultural evidence—among the ephemera of ticket stubs ("ADMIT ONE—Colored Balcony") and stereographs ("Sugar Cane Plantation, La.") and music scores ("Five Little Pieces" by child prodigy Philippa Schuyler), as well as photographs and paintings produced within and outside the black community. Source notes, illustration credits, and a reference bibliography are included, as well as a suggested reading list of current children's books and a detailed index. EB


This sparkling synthesis of text, layout, and art offers twenty-two poems about youthful play that refuse to allow imprisonment in a book to keep them static. While they might be fairly termed concrete poems (and a few of the entries, such as "Leaf Pile," engage in the familiar pattern-poem format), that's almost too staid a term for these verses, with their thematically appropriate interest in depicting action and movement rather than things: "Rolling Downhill," for instance, joyously depicts the swiftly changing, gradually slowing viewpoint of a downhill gyration ("Green green/ blue blue/ . . . blue/ green/blue/ blue/ THROUGH"), the words stacked and slanting on the page, separating as the pace of the tumble slackens. There's some calorie-burning reading here, as in "Skipping," where the reader follows the skipper by shifting back and forth from left to right (two words each time, of course) on a progress up the page ("Left foot/ right foot,/ here I go now"). Some
entries have an appropriate element of gamesmanship: "Tic-Tac-Toe (A battle plan)" needs to be read not from left to right or up or down, but in the order of the placement of the Xs and Os in the game it describes; "Connect the Dots" will likely tempt some readers to take pencil to page in order to uncover the poem's hidden shape. Team sports come in for attention, too, as with the game of "Soft-ball" that lays out the field with a compact couplet attached to each player. The watercolor and colored pencil illustrations work intelligently with the words and their arrangement, politely staying out of the way where appropriate, emphasizing rhythms and structure, and offering inviting youthful playgrounds ranging from verdant fields to sunny beaches. Bouncier but no less interesting than Janeczko's A Poke in the I (BCCB 6/01), this will give kids a chance to leap into poetry. DS

CAMERON, ANN  Gloria Rising; illus. by Lis Toft. Foster/Farrar, 2002 [112p] ISBN 0-374-32675-4 $15.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Gloria (of Gloria's Way, BCCB 2/00) discovers life inspiration in an unusual place: an onion. This, however, is no ordinary onion—it's a vegetable caught by Dr. Grace Street, the astronaut ("Almost an autographed onion," says Gloria) when Gloria is fooling around in the grocery store, which then leads to a conversation between the two and to Dr. Street's encouraging Gloria to pursue her own dream of going into space someday. Gloria's new fourth-grade teacher, however, unfairly disapproves of Gloria, and the young astronaut-to-be must struggle to retain her focus in the face of her teacher's disbelief. This is more overtly didactic than previous works about Gloria and her friends, but the dynamics of the lesson are realistic and Gloria's narration remains fresh and confiding. Dr. Street (who is somewhat reminiscent of Mae Jemison) is a little too good to be true, but she's a useful counterpoint to the all-too-authentic teacher who mistakes her own limitations for her students', and kids will be thrilled by the possibility of running into an astronaut in the checkout line. Toft's soft-textured black-and-white illustrations manage to convey ordinariness and possibility simultaneously in bright-eyed Gloria; an author's note provides information about space-relevant websites. DS


Smart, tough-minded Bernadette loves knowledge, loves being right, and loves a good fight, which has made her a stellar high-school debater, and it also makes her hungry to beat Wickham High's archrival, toney Pinehurst Academy, in the Classics Bowl. She's thrilled to be the keystone of Wickham's team for the Bowl, but she's got nagging doubts, not just about her team's capability (they're taking every shortcut from CliffsNotes to movie versions to cover the material) but about their eligibility for the competition, since Bernadette's logical mind can't figure out how they could have achieved the necessary scores. Bernadette's suspicions keep leading her back to the team's charismatic coach, Mr. Malory, whom she worships, and between happenstance and deliberate investigation she begins to realize that not only did Mr. Malory cheat to get the school into the competition, he's using inside information to give them an unfair advantage in the Bowl itself. The narrative treats plot, subplots, and minor details with the same fierce intensity, which robs the main theme of its emphasis and slows the pace occasionally; the elements of both Malory's deception and Bernadette's uncovering of same have
the flimsy convenience of melodrama rather than any real credibility. Cappo sets up a provocative ethical dilemma, however, and she takes it in some difficult directions (Bernadette has her eyes opened about her parents' ethics as well), effectively balancing the moral imperative against the reader's wish to see this deserving group of kids succeed. Call this the darker counterpart to *The View from Saturday* (BCCB 11/96) and use it to start discussions—or just hand it to young cynics who already believe that everything is rigged. DS

**CLEMENT-DAVIES, DAVID**  *The Sight*. Dutton, 2002  [432p]  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 8-12

Palla and Huttser are the Drappa and Dragga, or female and male head wolves, of a pack that is fleeing through a desperate Transylvanian winter from an evil leader, Morgra, whose following continues to increase. Morgra has the power of the Sight, which allows her to see the future; she's hunting Palla and Huttser's pack because it contains another precognitive wolf, whom Morgra hopes to use to further her own power. Clement-Davies creates a convincing culture of the wolves, with layers of legends and prophecies that parallel human stories, such as the story of the Red Girl, which reworks Little Red Riding Hood from the wolf's perspective. Unfortunately, the pacing drags as the wolves spend more time relating stories and theorizing at length about the meanings of various legends, and readers are likely to tire along the way of the lengthy narrative. Nevertheless, devoted fantasy readers as well as fans of darker animal stories may enjoy the complex and chilling world that Clement-Davies creates around these lupine protagonists. KM

**CLEMENTS, BRUCE**  *A Chapel of Thieves*. Farrar, 2002  [224p]  
ISBN 0-374-37701-4  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

Armed with a bushel of religious zeal but far less common sense and no foreign-language skills, Clayton Desant heads for 1849 Paris, that hotbed of sin just ripe for salvation. It's clear from his letters to younger brother, Henry, though, that the congregation he perceives as repentant lambs is actually a den of housebreakers who've set the American innocent up as a cover for their nefarious operations. Henry therefore undertakes a rescue mission, steamboating from St. Louis to New Orleans, shipping out to France, setting up modest housekeeping near Clayton's chapel, and launching an assault on his brother's poor judgment. The charm of this romp (tardy sequel to *I Tell A Lie Every So Often*, BCCB 11/74) lies less in the aggregation of unlikely events or the serendipitous interventions of kindly Dame Fortune than in Henry's narrative evaluation of adventures in which he's embroiled. Whether assisting at a shipboard autopsy or at a street riot engineered by Victor Hugo, Henry recounts his doings with deadpan seriousness, while readers observe just how close his and Clayton's lives come to spinning comically out of control. With brisk pacing, a happy ending, and a grin or chuckle on every page, Henry Desant's literary second coming will be welcomed by readers. EB

**COHN, RACHEL**  *Gingerbread*. Simon, 2002  [172p]  
ISBN 0-689-84337-2  $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 9-12

Sixteen-year-old Cyd Charisse has been dubbed a "recovering hellion" by her affectionate stepfather after being expelled from her New England boarding school
and reinstalled in her San Francisco home, but her uptight mother isn’t convinced that shoplifting and falling for a cute surfer boy called “Shrimp” genuinely constitute recovery. Increasingly frustrated with her daughter’s waywardness, Cyd’s mother sends her off to visit Frank, Cyd’s biological father, whose only interaction with his daughter since she was five was to provide the funds for Cyd’s abortion (an abortion that her mother still doesn’t know about) when she called him in sheer desperation. Significantly inseparable from her father’s long-ago gift to her, the doll she named Gingerbread, Cyd is thrilled at the chance to find a place in Frank’s life and his New York world, but real life proves more complicated than the familial fantasy to which she’d been clinging. Cohn writes with verve and an edible, unique style somewhat reminiscent of Francesca Lia Block’s in its ability to evoke a vivid and believable language that’s separate from that of the parental generation, but also with a touch of the breathless, desperate comedy of Bridget Jones’ Diary. She never crosses the line into taking Cyd herself less than seriously, however: it’s clear both that Cyd is in a great deal of pain and that she is a strong, imaginative, likable young woman who knows herself and her own worth (“I may, in fact, be one of those people who will be content just to make great coffee and hang out on foggy broody beaches and not worry too much about the great issues of the world. I don’t think that makes me a bad person”). Cyd’s interactions with other characters in the colorful cast are the stuff of authenticity: her and her mother’s volatile relationship is one of the most realistically depicted in YA literature, while her sweet, affectionate connection to her newfound older brother shows Cyd at her best. This is a sparkling authorial debut featuring a memorable YA heroine.

DS


The Armed Forces grudgingly credentialed them to get the women’s angle and human interest stories, but, as Coleman relates here, women war correspondents brought their own goals and agendas to the World War II theaters of operation with no intention of sitting demurely on the sidelines. Opening chapters set the stage for America’s entry into the war and comment on women journalists’ involvement to that date, but the action doesn’t really take off until the War Department mandates accreditation for correspondents and photographers, confers the honorary rank of captain, and outfits journalists for the war zone: “Men routinely obtained accreditation; women were typically denied it. The women were told that there were no facilities for them. That they were not physically strong enough. That they would distract the soldiers. That war was a male subject. That... the U.S. Army forbade women from going into combat.” No matter—they were going anyhow, and many risked not only their lives but their even more highly cherished credentials to climb aboard fighter planes and nose behind front lines to get a scoop. Chronological organization is confounded by the rush of personalities on and off the stage as Coleman tries to keep tabs on more than a dozen featured journalists, none of whom seem to stay put long enough for readers to get a feel for her experience. Still, there’s plenty of action here, and an abundance of black-and-white photos—both of and by the correspondents—underscore for perceptive viewers how women journalists served as the purveyors and the subjects of wartime
propaganda and PR. A final chapter details the women's postwar lives; a bibliography and index are appended. EB

**Crowe, Chris** *Mississippi Trial, 1955.* Fogelman, 2002  [240p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

Though raised mostly in the north, Hiram has always enjoyed spending his summers at his grandpa's farm just outside a small town in the Mississippi delta; now that he's sixteen, however, he begins to see the effects of southern segregation and the hallmarks of racism more clearly. Meanwhile, there's another northern kid visiting relatives in the area: Emmett Till is a young black man from Chicago, and his straightforward ways are seen as insubordination in this rigidly Old South environment. The novel blends factual history about young Emmett and his murder with the experiences of fictional Hiram, who slowly comes to realize that his grandfather's White Citizens Council meetings may be more sinister than they initially seemed and begins to understand why his father has essentially disowned Hiram's grandfather. Although the novel starts somewhat slowly, once the main action begins, the story is gripping right to its final depiction of the flimsy trial where Emmett's likely murderers are acquitted. History teachers will approve of the focus on pivotal civil-rights events, and readers will appreciate the insights the author offers into the minds of people who fought to banish Jim Crow laws as well those who sought to perpetuate a system of hatred. KM

**Curley, Marianne** *Old Magic.* Simon Pulse, 2002  [320p]
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 6-9

Teenager Kate keeps her witchcraft secret from everyone but her friend Hannah and her grandmother (cum sorceress) Jillian, until new boy Jarrod creates a thunderstorm inside a classroom. Handsome but clumsy Jarrod has tremendous powers but refuses to admit to or recognize them, until a near tragedy forces him to turn to Kate and her grandmother for help. Kate recognizes that Jarrod and his family are under a centuries-old curse, so with Jillian's help the two teenagers travel back to the England of the Middle Ages to confront the sorcerer who placed the curse and either prevent him from casting it or kill him. The combination of teen romance, supernatural tale, and time-travel novel is an appealing one, but the disparate elements never successfully coalesce. The magic has neither foundation nor logic (how can Jarrod train for only three weeks and be strong enough to challenge a powerful, experienced sorcerer who's expecting his attack?), and the time-travel logic is murky (how do Kate and Jarrod wind up in sixth-century Britain when they start out from twentieth-century New Zealand?). Despite these flaws, the pleasures of time travel, stolen kisses, and a happy ending may serve to satisfy voracious fantasy readers. JMD

**Dalkey, Kara** *Ascension.* Avon, 2002  235p

Fifteen-year-old Nia is a two-legged mermyd (a species of mermaids including males and females) of the Bluefin clan. Her heart is set on becoming one of the ten Avatars, advisors who rule Atlantis in telepathic symbiosis with Farworlders, ancient water-beings of great power; when her unpromising cousin Garun is chosen
to represent their clan in the competition for a newly vacant Avatar position, her dream is shattered. A disappointed Nia nonetheless attends the ceremonies, to watch her cousin and her romantic interest, Cephan. Observing the events, Nia realizes that the competition is being magically manipulated by the current Avatars and their Farworlder partners. Her discovery leads to a revelation by her grandfather: an oracle has declared her the new Avatar, who will sow the seeds of the destruction of Atlantis, and the Avatar/Farworlder interference is an attempt to avoid the unavoidable. The pace of this first novel in the Water series is occasionally sluggish, the characterizations are sometimes shallow, and the complacency of the Atlanteans is hard to believe. Dalkey (author of Little Sister, BCCB 12/96) creates an effective underwater civilization, however, complete with social hierarchy, manipulated history, and romantic intrigue. In the end, this offers a credible fantasy world with a creditable heroine suitable for series fans. JMD

DALLAS-CONTÉ, JULIET Cock-a-Moo-Moo; illus. by Alison Bartlett. Little, 2002 [32p] ISBN 0-316-60505-0 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys R 2-4 yrs

The farmyard rooster is dismayed when he cannot remember how to cock-a-doodle-doo. His failed attempts ("cock-a-moo-moo," "cock-a-quack-quack," "cock-a-oink-oink," and "cock-a-baa-baa") only lead to rejection by the local henhouse, and he retires in embarrassment to the barn for the night ("I'm never going to crow again"). An attempted henhouse raid by a sly fox galvanizes the dejected rooster into action, and his multilingual calls alert the farmyard in time; in his joy at his triumphant defense, the rooster rediscovers his true voice. This isn't an original idea (see Most's Cock-a-Doodle-Moo, for instance), but the book offers a tidy treatment of a classic toddler-pleasing situation. Bright, textured, broad-brush paintings enhanced with scratchboard detailing revel in the story's playfulness; their strong figures will appeal to youngsters from across the room. This will be an excellent addition to your own preschool barnyard during storytime. EAB


Fifteen short stories and three poems based on the myth of the Green Man, the mythic wild man or spirit of the wood, make up this fertile collection. Fantasy fans will recognize a number of popular authors, such as Michael Cadnum ("Daphne"), Patricia McKillip ("Hunter's Moon"), Gregory Maguire ("Fee, Fi, Foe et Cetera"), and Emma Bull ("Joshua Tree"). The stories, commissioned for this collection, tackle the mythic theme from a variety of unique standpoints: a green man with a passion for life searches for a woman who understands the concept of a graceful death (Nina Kiriki Hoffman's "Grounded"); an adolescent runs into the Queen of the Fairies in Central Park and plays a risky game of riddles to save herself (Delia Sherman's "Grand Central Park"); a young man realizes that the sister he mourns as dead lives in the canopy of the Greenwood (Midori Snyder's "Charlie's Away"). The stories are thematically connected yet tonally varied, and each strongly plotted tale conjures a credible fantasy world. A brief biography of and remarks by the writer are included with each story. Datlow and Windling are
Dealey, Erin  Goldie Locks Has Chicken Pox; illus. by Hanako Wakiyama. Atheneum, 2002 32p ISBN 0-689-82981-7 $16.00 Ad 4-7 yrs

Like many a youngster, Goldie turns up spotted with chicken pox, but her parents have more than most to contend with: first, they have to check to see (after "apologizing for the chair") if the bears came down with the virus, then they have to fend off various storybook characters ranging from Henny Penny to Little Bo Peep, and they also have to mediate between Goldie and her obstreperous younger brother, who's jealous of all the attention. The tetrameter couplets are too often forced and jingly, but there are some witty turns here, and Dealey is well in touch with the indignities of life under polka dots and quarantine. Wakiyama's oils are eerily convincing in their retro Golden Book style: salmon-pink people with baby-blue doll eyes inhabit a Betty Crocker world in Fiesta ware hues; while the artwork's more interesting for its imitative success than for its actual contribution to the story, it creates an intriguing domestic fantasy world. This isn't as deft as Laurie Halse Anderson's Turkey Pox (BCCB 11/96), but kids trying not to scratch may be glad of the fanciful literary company. DS


Amos is a hippo with a problem—he has lots of bugs and ticks that make him itch, but no tick bird to eat them. He advertises for a bird, and, after turning down a Bach-and-Beethoven singing thrush and a buzzard who apparently enjoys live meat, he finds Kumba, a female tick bird with an appetite. Unfortunately, Kumba takes Amos' suggestion to make herself at home literally, building a nest on Amos' head, but Amos can't bring himself to fire Kumba, especially after she lays three eggs in her nest. The humor here is somewhat adult, the concept is old, and the text is rambling. The anthropomorphized animal kingdom and jolly jungle social life will attract younger readers, however, and the design and reading level are right on the money for that audience. Delaney's black-and-white line drawings have an appealingly Thurberesque quality; a generous number of them gracefully break up text blocks and add some child appeal. This isn't up to classic egg-hatching stories such as Horton Hatches the Egg, but it may suit readers looking for an undemanding animal-themed romp. JMD


If Ole Golly saved eleven-year-old Harriet from depression in Louise Fitzhugh's 1964 classic Harriet the Spy (BCCB 12/64), Harriet returns the favor here when her former nanny turns up depressed and withdrawn after fleeing from a brief marriage to Mr. Waldenstein. The difference is that author Louise Fitzhugh died years ago and author Helen Ericson, who read Harriet the Spy as a nine-year-old, is portraying characters originated and developed by someone else but released for
Ericson's imitation, including some witty scenes and chic plotting, is not bad at all, but the fierce, unexpected originality of Fitzhugh's creation is replaced by a more complacent tone, and one vaguely resents the fact that nowhere on the cover, title page, copyright page, or list of "other books featuring Harriet the Spy" (facing the title page) does Fitzhugh's name appear. As always, Harriet's parents are distinguished by their absence, in this case a three-month business trip to Paris. Harriet's sleuthing eventually reveals that Ole Golly is pregnant (enceinte rather than "innocent," the word that Harriet thinks she overhears in a phone conversation and which leads her to believe Ole Golly has inadvertently committed a crime). Sport is very much in evidence, but Beth Ellen and Janie are missing; instead, Harriet acquires a new friend just as eccentric and isolated as she is, a mysterious neighbor whom readers will identify long before Harriet does. This addition to the cast has potential for imaginative peculiarity, but she ends up more as a functionary plot device than a fully explored individual, and the pace is somewhat halting. Neither factor will prevent young readers anxious for the further adventures of Harriet from consuming this "companion" book, which suffers less from comparison with Fitzhugh's own lower-staked sequels, *The Long Secret* and *Sport*, than with her premier depiction of Harriet's deeply felt fall from grace.


Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-10

Six authors contribute a dozen essays on battles for civil rights in the United States, each spotlighting the experience of an unsung or little-known personage who skirmished for his or her full right of citizenship. The essays proceed chronologically, and since little information is often available for some of the earlier heroes (e.g., eighteenth-century Separatist Baptist John Waller; runaway slave Shadrach Minkins), the opening chapters are a bit padded and rambling. Far stronger are episodes tightly focused on the twentieth-century activists—Sara Bard Field's "road trip" to promote women's suffrage, ex-Topaz internee Jukichi Harada's fight for home ownership, Nisqually Indian Billy Frank Jr.'s fish-ins for tribal treaty rights. Layout is intimidatingly dense, with double columns of cramped type and a plethora of lengthy boxed insets featuring documents, testimonies, and episodes from related historic events. Readers brave enough to take the plunge, though, will find the essays themselves surprisingly smooth going. An index and credits for the large collection of black-and-white illustrations is included, as is information on the Teaching Tolerance project, of which this volume is a component.


ISBN 1-58717-132-5 $14.95

Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

Responding to tragedies at the World Trade Center and Columbine High School, the authorial pair of clerics (one a Jewish rabbi, one a Catholic monsignor) offers children strategies for assessing the "bleeding" leads they encounter in the media and working through resultant anxieties. The God Squad, as this established author team is known in media appearances, addresses a host of disasters manmade and natural and, within a format that is part theodicy and part self-help, encour-
ages readers to consider events in a broader context, assess realistically the likelihood of such events happening to them, and take steps either to prevent another such event or assist victims of the tragedies. The effectiveness of the message rests heavily on whether readers accept the tone in which it is delivered—all too frequently patronizing and unctuous: "There are a lot of things that need to be fixed in this world in order to get rid of terrorism, but the grown-ups are the ones who need to work on that. . . . There are three things that you need to get fixed, though: getting rid of your fear, getting through your sadness, and making your insides good and happy." Moreover, the unremitting use of the locution "bad stuff" will strike many middle-graders as unacceptably childish. There is a refreshing spirit of optimism here, however, and a generous measure of common sense, and both faith-filled and faith-shaken readers may find the book offers some illumination in dark times. EB

GERSTEIN, MORDICAI What Charlie Heard; written and illus. by Mordicai Gerstein. Foster/Farrar, 2002 40p ISBN 0-374-38292-1 $17.00 R Gr. 2-4

Even today, the name of composer Charles Ives is hardly a household word, and his music has never really gained a wide popular audience. Gerstein's compact introduction to the man may not change that, but it will give kids an insight both into recent music history and the creative life of a genuine American innovator. The book offers particular emphasis on the influence of Ives' supportive father, himself a musician, and on Ives' all-American small-town boyhood, where music and sports vied for his time and where he absorbed the sounds of America such as marching bands and tent-meeting hymn singers; it then goes on to discuss his nurturing marriage to the aptly named Harmony, the public puzzlement at his music, and the eventual recognition it received. The simple and understated text capably covers the key points of Ives' life, but it's the illustrations that really evoke the musician's experience: the spreads are packed with onomatopoeic text floating through the air in various colors and textures, leaping out of Charlie's head, and emanating from various natural sources, which makes the art thick with the sounds of daily life Charlie heard (and sometimes with the scornful reactions he encountered) and incorporated into his music. The result is sometimes jarring and almost overwhelming when weighed against Gerstein's speedy yet delicate linework and mottled, sometimes iridescent hues, which is doubtless deliberate and absolutely fitting for Ives' challenging music; these are full, jostling, and lively views rather than well-tamed and pretty ones. This might provoke some interesting discussions about artistic evocations as well as introducing kids to Ives' music, and if youngsters want to respond with their own daily-sound cacophony, well, that's probably the best tribute of all. DS


This sequel to Coretta Scott King Honor Book Meet Danitra Brown (BCCB 7/94) focuses on Danitra's friend, Zuri, who lets us know right away that she is hurt when Danitra takes off for vacation: "my supposed-to-be best friend/ is leaving me, and loving it." Eventually, after bonding with a previously overlooked neigh-
bor girl and receiving her first "I wish that you were here" letter from Danitra, Zuri no longer feels "alone, with nowhere particular to be." Thirteen accessible and skillfully paced poems—many representing letters from vacationing Danitra or from Zuri left behind—depict the highlights of that summer: a block party in the city, a day at the beach for Zuri and her mom, a family gathering for Danitra in the country, and, finally, the friends' reunion. Double-page spreads from varied perspectives animate the story, while the grainy brown pastels that overlay and surround the vivid if occasionally stiff figures provide visual continuity. An uplifting contemporary spin on the town mouse and the country mouse, this is a natural for an end-of-semester readaloud or independent summer reading. FK


Iris (from Iris and Walter, BCCB 12/00, and Iris and Walter: True Friends, 4/01) is impatiently anticipating the birth of her new baby sister: "It's going to be so much fun. We'll get to push the baby in a carriage. We'll feed it a bottle. It will be just like playing with a doll." When baby Rose finally comes, however, the reality falls far short of Iris' imaginings: "There was no getting around it. Baby Rose was a fusspot. Day after day, night after night, Baby Rose cried and fussed." A fed-up Iris is taken on an outing to the amusement park by her understanding grandfather, who assures her that everything will be okay, and, eventually, everything is: "Little by little, Baby Rose began to change. She fussed less and less. She ate more and more. She smiled a lot. Especially at Iris." By the final chapter in this four-chapter reader, Iris can honestly say, "It's fun being a big sister!" This third episode in the saga of Iris and Walter's friendship is more programmatic than the first two; the action here centers on Iris and the new baby rather than on Iris and her friendship with Walter, and the change of focus is less than satisfying. Davenier's watercolors retain their original charm, however, and her palette takes on a rosy tone appropriate to the baby's name. The faces of the returning cast are a bit unarticulated, but new baby Rose has a strong character all her own. Despite the more pedestrian direction, this is a cozy new-sib story for early readers. JMD

HENEGHAN, JAMES Flood. Foster/Farrar, 2002 [192p] ISBN 0-374-35057-4 $16.00 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

With his mother, father, and home swept away by a raging Vancouver river, flood-battered Andy Flynn is taken back to Halifax by his maternal aunt, Mona. Andy takes an instant dislike to her, and before he even reaches her home, he takes off to find his father, who deserted the family when Andy was five. Vincent Flynn isn't that hard to find; it seems that every patron of every bar and cheap eatery on the seedy side of Halifax knows him. He welcomes his son warmly and makes space in his roach-infested boardinghouse rooms, tickled beyond belief to have a sharp, capable eleven-year-old son to show off to his cronies. After a few weeks of living la vida Vincent, Andy is cold, malnourished, bored, and fed up with his father's promises to abandon welfare, give up his sales of contraband cigarettes and booze, and get a real job. When Vincent suffers a broken leg running away from a pair of hit men, a very resentful Andy is packed off to Aunt Mona and Uncle Hugh, where, of course, in time he thrives. Heneghan sets his drama within a close-quartered Irish community, and characters that at first appear to be typecast are
actually drawn with remarkable depth. “Waster” Vincent is a happy drunk and
teller of tales; he’s also loving and full of good intentions, but broken past the
point of reform. Aunt Mona is the starchy Irish matriarch, brandishing terse words
and rosary beads to keep her household in line; she’s also capable of great tender-
ness and holds a heart full of sympathy for both her nephew and her ne’er-do-well
brother-in-law. A small band of sheehogue, or Little People, hover around Andy
throughout, and their commentary at the end of each chapter assures readers that,
despite his travails, they’ll see he comes to no harm. And who’s to say it isn’t so?

EB

HINDLEY, JUDY  Do Like a Duck Does!, illus. by Ivan Bates. Candlewick,
2002  [34p]
Reviewed from galleys R 3-5 yrs

Mama Duck is out for a walk with her babies when they are joined by a stranger
who claims to be a duck: “Well, he has no feathers/ and he has no beak./ He has
four claws/ on his hairy-scary feet./ He has two ears/ that stick up a mile,/ and a
wicked/ foxy nose and/ a wicked/ foxy smile.” Mama Duck knows it’s a fox with
dinner designs on her ducklings, but she doesn’t let on. Instead, she invites the
“hairy-scary stranger” to “do like a duck does,” and she leads her ducklings and the
fox in a series of ducky doings that end in the river, where the ducklings swim and
the fox—doesn’t. Hindley’s rhyming text bounces right along, and while adult
readers may tire of the predictable rhythms, kid listeners ought to appreciate the
obvious humor, mini-suspense, and opportunities for joining in. Bates’ watercol-
ors are a little bland in the palette, but they feature a lively cast of characters, the
appropriately downy ducklings protected by an appropriately suspicious Mama
Duck and threatened by a hungry (but too cute to be really threatening) fluffy-
tailed fox. With the right dramatic reading, this will be a successful storytime
drama. JMD

HODGES, MARGARET, ad.  The Boy Who Drew Cats; illus. by Aki Sogabe. Holiday
House, 2002  32p
ISBN 0-8234-1594-5  $16.95  Ad 6-9 yrs

In old Japan, a young boy is sent by his parents to be trained for the priesthood.
His passion lies not in spirituality, however, but in art; specifically, in drawing cats
on any available surface. After a time his exasperated teacher/priest sends the boy
off, saying his future may lie in being a great artist. The boy travels to a larger
temple, to seek shelter with the priests there; when he arrives he finds the temple
empty and dusty and full of blank white screens. The screens are too much to
resist, and he fills them with drawings of cats. In the middle of the night he is
awakened by sounds of a terrible battle, but he is afraid to look; come daylight he
finds a scene of carnage. On the floor is a dead rat goblin, and on the mouths of
the cats drawn by the boy are traces of blood. This retelling of Lafcadio Hearn’s
tale is disappointingly choppy and overexplanatory, lacking the grace of the origi-
nal. Sogabe’s mixed-media illustrations (cut paper, watercolor, and airbrush), how-
ever, are stylish and fluid. The cats are especially effective, with a rounded felinity,
soft-paw grace, and otherworldly air that makes them believable supernatural agents.
Hodges closes with a note about her source and about the real Japanese artist
represented by the legendary boy. JMD
Wealthy orphan Maia is turned over to the care of her new governess, Miss Minton, and sent off to live with relatives on a rubber plantation. Early twentieth century Brazil is a miracle to both girl and governess, and not even wicked twin cousins Gwendolyn and Beatrice nor their money-grasping parents, the Carters, can spoil their joy. In the course of a neatly turned plot Maia saves a young actor from penury, discovers the truth about the missing heir to an English fortune, and flees upriver to a life free from constraint among the accepting members of the Xanti tribe. Ibbotson proves she is as adept at historical romance as she is at fantasy (Dial-a-Ghost, BCCB 9/01, etc.) in this rousing adventure. The characters, while true to type (orphan girl, stern governess, wicked aunt, romantic rogue, etc.) are each individual enough to avoid being flat. While the locals may be a bit idyllically accepting of the European presence, the setting is capably evoked, and the contrast between the parochial Carters and their more adaptable neighbors is clearly made. A strong pace and the occasional cliff-hanging chapter will make this title an excellent readaloud. Full-page, densely hatched black-and-white illustrations employ the good old convention of pull-quotes as captions, adding to the old-fashioned allure of this Amazon adventure. JMD

While all the details of personhood could hardly be crammed within two covers, Jukes manages to cover an impressive breadth of guy territory here. Keeping to the automotive metaphor throughout (which makes for some amusing paragraph headings and illustrative juxtapositions), the book addresses myriad subjects: physical changes, hygiene and nutrition, familial and romantic relationships, emotional health, sex, contraception, and various safety issues. The tone sometimes leans towards the alarmist, with an emphasis on exclamation points and sweeping (sometimes questionable) warning statements, but that's in keeping with the book's essentially protective approach, like that of a square but aware parent. The sexually related material is useful (if largely heterocentric), the help-line numbers are, well, helpful, but it's the life-conduct tidbits for which readers will be truly grateful, since it's much harder to find instructions on shaving with different kind of razors or lists of conversational landmines with girls; this will also provide a lot of useful information for girls wondering what the heck is up with the boys in their class. Though readers might occasionally wish for more substantive visuals to clarify anatomical and other points, the format, with its text in blue ink and its multitude of sidebars, subheadings, and campy period photographs, is an inviting one. An index is included. DS

The Atlantic Ocean narrates this book itself, explaining its reach ("I rub shoulders with North America and bump into Africa/ I slosh around South America and..."
crash into Europe"), its history ("I've been crossed and probed,/ charted,/ studied,/ dirtied"), and its effects ("Sand and pebbles/ rattle and clatter a chorus/ as I rush in/ and pull away"). While there's only an eyedropperful of actual information here, the poetic evocation is surprisingly geologically effective rather than merely frothy, since Karas has focused on kid-accessible and kid-appealing details and descriptions that will conjure dreams in inlanders and recognition in the more coastally proximate. There's a whisper of Remy Charlip in his oversized oceanic illustrations, which use gouache and acrylic touched up with pencil (and sometimes with other effects). Their creative compositions and perspectives (a cutaway view of the ocean shows underwater peaks and valleys, submarines roaming and ships sounding the depths; a fish-eye view looks up through a royal sea to the paler hues surrounding the bottom of the fisherman's boat; a crosshatching of latitude and longitude lines delicately trace across the full Atlantic view), often employing curved horizons to emphasize the Atlantic's magnitude, will expand the audience's understanding quicker than any "Fun Facts" list ever could. Use this to give some life to an intro geography unit or just to prep for a day at the beach. An additional note ("Some Things about Me") provides more information and some explicit ecological reflections. DS


It's been a hairy time in picture books of late, and this one raises the stakes with not one, not two, but three stories about hair. "Kevin's Hair Scare" features a youngster who likes his hair getting in his eyes "a lot better than the idea of anyone cutting his hair." Haircut finally completed, Kevin takes some of his hair home in a baggie "to remind himself whenever he goes for a haircut: it's just hair. Or is it?" In the second, dialogue-heavy entry, "Ramon's Screamingly Bad Hair Day," Ramon tries to tell his chums how scary a bad hair day can be, but he keeps getting interrupted by his friends' gross jokes and stories. The concluding tale, "Helen's Book of Dos," is a collection of drawings and observations about hair and hairdos. A list of hair "Dos and Don'ts" (which range from the vague—"Most people will get several hundred haircuts during their lifetime"—to the incorrect—a claim that hair has emotions) concludes the volume. Despite the occasional humorous touch, the stories are rambling, pointless, and dull. None of the three entries has a distinct plot, and the characters' observations about hair are neither original nor funny enough to maintain interest. The art is energetic but loud and awkward, with little compensation for the uninvolving text. While deciphering the images may intrigue some viewers momentarily, they're ultimately better off with Tarpley's Bippity Bop Barbershop (BCCB 3/02) or Williams-García's Catching the Wild Waiyuuzee (BCCB 12/00). JMD


Lawlor uses the fictionalized voice of George Bennett, who journeyed the Overland Trail with his family to California in 1850, to retrace their perilous Death Valley crossing and explain the role "faithful Old Crump," the ox, played in their safe arrival at a Spanish settlement near present-day Los Angeles. Forced to aban-
don their possessions and burn their wagons to survive the bitter cold desert nights, the party relied on compliant Old Crump to carry the youngest children in make-shift saddlebags while the elders struggled along on foot. There's little plot apart from the crossing itself, and listeners will readily infer from the narrator's reminiscence that they'll make it through all right. The real interest lies in Winch's evocative mixed-media illustrations, which combine fragile, naïvely misshapen human forms set against a desert ruggedly textured with photographed boulders, a deep sky streaked with flame-tinted sunset or roughly pebbled with stars, and verdant California hills fur-coated with waving grasses. No specific sources for this "true story" are offered, apart from Lawlor's opening testimony that "their journey out of the 'jaws of hell' was recorded in diaries and letters," but listeners will undoubtedly take Lawlor and George at their word and simply enjoy scenes of tragedy narrowly averted. EB


This simple story features a little chick who roams around befriending and imitating all the animals he meets, until finally he comes home to Mama Chicken and demonstrates to her the many animal sounds he heard around the farm. The succinct rhyming text repeats ("This little chick from over the way/ went to play with the pigs one day./ And what do you think they heard him say?"), with variation only in the line describing the animals encountered. The text will quickly become as familiar as a favorite nursery rhyme to listeners, and there is ample opportunity for audience members to join the mimicry of the little chick, pitching in with their own quacking, mooing, and ribbiting. Wood engravings provide bold visual outlines as well as more filigreed details that will appeal to both groups and individual viewers. The animal characters, from doe-eyed cows to cavorting piglets, are each distinguished in their expressiveness, but the effervescent little chick, whose orange feet and yellow wings splay wildly with his excitement, steals the show. This will appeal to a relatively broad audience of the preschool set, including babies learning animal sounds along with nursery-schoolers guffawing at the chick's silliness; you may want to purchase a few extra copies. KM


Freshly minted, bagged, and trucked to a Federal Reserve bank and on to a local bank, a shiny new quarter experiences the first day in its eventful life. It begins its adventures in the money pouch of a grocery store cashier, who hands it off in change to a shopper ("$20.00-19.75=$.25"), who buys a balloon from a clown, who purchases a can of pop from a vending machine, whence our hero emerges as change for a buck, and, well, you get the idea. Not only does Leedy successfully fire up the imagination with her plausible tracing of the coin's hectic travels, but she scatters loads of painless math calculation along the way, as store owners figure bills and make change, employees collect wages, and friends pay back loans. Even
pagination gets into the act, with bill and coin combos that compute to the proper numeral for each page. The action (and kids' will be delighted to find so much of it in a math book) plays out in bubble-framed, zesty-hued scenes with a retro-styled cast reminiscent of instructional cartoons and filmstrips of yore. A brief but cogent overview of the advantages of currency over barter ("These potatoes will pay for your college education.") "Won't they rot before then?") some facts about minting and printing, and a glossary of money words round out the title. As penny Abe observes to quarter George, "It sounds as if you had a great day!" Readers can check for him in their own pockets tomorrow. EB

LEWIS, J. PATRICK  

This may not be Lewis at his most poetic, but in these twenty-plus problems set to rhyme he delivers plenty of incentive to hold up the fingers, pick up a calculator, or simply strain the brain and compute. The riddles offer a range of mathematical challenge: simple subtraction for "Thomasina's Eggs," long division for "The Polka-Dot Pajama Bird," strings of mixed operations for "The Mailman for the 92-Story Building." Lewis even tosses in a couple of logic teasers, just to keep kids on their toes: "Farmer Flynn had 20 sheep./ All but 9 died./ Now you decide:/ How many sheep does Flynn still keep?" (Nine; but of course you knew that.) Several selections require readers to do a bit of outside investigation (if, for example, they don't know "the number of teeth in a regular mouth") or to examine carefully Remkiewicz's chipper, clue-laden mixed-media scenes ("How Many Coconuts?"). Solutions and computation hints appear in mirror writing at the bottom of each riddle for kids who need a nudge or the reassurance that they "got it right." Teachers who discover this title before their students do have a month's worth of daily math challenges right in hand. EB

LITTLE, LAEL  

Carlene Carter has lived her life in the shadow of Keith, her "lost brother," who disappeared when he was only four (three years before Carlene was even born). Everyone but Carlene's mother is certain Keith drowned that fateful day on the lake, but Mrs. Carter thinks her son remains alive somewhere, and she's returned to the small town of Lake Isadora, scene of the tragedy, to prove it. Carlene is disconcerted by flashes of memory she couldn't possibly have, memories of the town, of a boyfriend there, and even of Keith and the time of his loss; it becomes increasingly clear that these memories belong to Elaine, a woman who died on the lake that day, and that Elaine's spirit has returned in Carlene to bring the truth of the terrible event to light. The book's careful setup ensures a successful plot: Carlene is just baffled enough, the memories are just obscure enough, the false clues are just tempting enough to keep readers involved and guessing. The secondary dynamics are effectively employed, with Carlene's mother convinced that Carlene's purpose in life is to be an instrument in retrieving her brother, Carlene drawn to Elaine's handsome grandson, who resembles the sweetheart Carlene sees in Elaine's memories, and seven-year-old J. P., the town pet, serving as both guide to the town and reminder of young Keith. It's all tied up a bit conveniently, but in this
kind of book the journey is more important than the destination, and Littke takes readers on a satisfying supernatural trip. DS


This latest installment in the adventures of Froggy has a very traditional plot: Miss Martin tells Froggy, “If you and your friends start a marching band, and compete against other schools in the Apple Blossom Parade—you can win the prize!” The practice sessions that follow this announcement provide lots of reader-pleasing ka-BOOMs and honks, while demonstrating the cardinal rule of marching: “Don’t look left. Don’t look right. And DON’T STOP FOR ANYTHING.” Unfortunately, the climactic pile-up of band members that occurs during the parade when Froggy is halted by a “BONK” from majorette Frogilina’s soaring baton doesn’t have the necessary visual impact, and there’s no real logic to Froggy’s prize-winning response to disaster (he “started to wail a wild swamp tune”). The expressive, old-fashioned watercolor illustrations with charcoal outlines on clean white backgrounds have a cheery charm, however, and readers familiar with this ragtag band will enjoy their triumph. FK


Fifteen-year-old Ilena obeys her father’s final words directing her to journey from the small village she has always called her home to Dun Alyn, a stronghold some distance away. She disguises herself as a boy to cross dark-ages Britain, en route finding a traveling companion in Durant, a warrior in service to King Arthur. Once at Dun Alyn, Ilena is rapidly caught up in the conflict between the old religion and the new Christianity, and to her confusion and dismay she is denounced as an evil spirit and imprisoned, soon to be sacrificed to the old gods. After being rescued by an old friend of her father’s, she discovers the secret of her mysterious origins; a battle for her birthright leaves her chieftain of Dun Alyn, and her romantic future is assured by the presence of Durant. Contextual tidbits are tossed rather cavalierly into this historical romance, and the characterizations are sketchy, with Ilena telling more than the author shows. Nonetheless, the pace is steady, the suspense is palpable, and Ilena’s journey from exiled orphan to warrior chieftain is one worth following. JMD


Groundbreaking (hmm) twentieth-century paleontologist Andrews may be best remembered for the startling finds his Central Asian Expeditions uncovered throughout the 1920s, but, as Marrin clearly points out, his real contributions lay in organization and fundraising, without which modern ongoing, systematic field research would scarcely exist. Charming the cash away from big-name investors and directing a fleet of camels and jeeps deep into the Gobi, Andrews facilitated the CAE’s
achievements. Discovery of fossilized dino eggs (at first incorrectly thought to be the prey rather than the offspring of Oviraptor) is in itself momentous enough to keep readers involved, but the expedition’s tale has plenty more thrills to offer, from attacks by bandits and pit vipers to a first course of sheep’s eyes served by a gracious Mongolian host. Marrin, respected maven of nonfiction titles for teens, seems a bit uneasy in addressing a younger audience, overdefining terms and cluttering the text with background digressions that might be more gracefully relegated to sidebars. Neither is the layout or photography quite as stunning here as in Ann Bausum’s biography of Dragon Bones and Dinosaur Eggs (BCCB 5/00). Nonetheless, dino and rock hounds will be pleasantly sated with sweaty toil and glamorous finds, and they’ll also garner some collateral knowledge of China’s internal turmoil, which eventually brought an end to the fruitful mission. A bibliography, a list of web sites, and index are included. EB

McGee, Marni  *The Colt and the King*; illus. by John Winch. Holiday House, 2002 [34p]
ISBN 0-8234-1695-X  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  M  4-7 yrs

An aged donkey recalls the time years before when he was pressed into the service of the long-legged man who rode him along a palm strewn path into the city of Jerusalem (“The strangers called him Jesus, but many called him King”). McGee follows the literary road traversed by Brian Wildsmith in *The Easter Story* (BCCB 1/94), in which the Biblical account of Jesus’ triumphant entry is prelude to the coming Passion. Whereas Wildsmith preserved Scriptural details, employing the donkey as a recurrent focal point, McGee dwells ponderously on the interior musings of the animal itself and leaves Jesus as little more than a shadowy catalyst for its outpouring of rhetoric (“Happiness made my hooves tap high, and joy was in my breath. My heart welled up with wonder, like a barrel that fills with rain”). The procession from countryside into the city is given no context, and although an author’s note offers thoughtful comments on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, children who cannot connect the ride on the “colt” (a puzzling term to chose for a donkey that’s no youngster) with surrounding events will find no clues here. Winch provides some appealing visual contrasts between the cool greens of fields beyond the city walls (though such landscapes are hardly regionally authentic) and ruddy tones of towering block walls and stone arches. Startling angles and tight layering of figures add an element of surprise but never fully compensate for inconsistent draftsmanship. Librarians ever on the prowl for “new Easter stuff” for sizable religious collections might wish to check this title, but tighter budgets call for fresh copies of Wildsmith. EB

McLaren, Clemence  *Aphrodite’s Blessings: Love Stories from the Greek Myths*. Atheneum, 2002  202p
ISBN 0-689-84377-1  $16.00  M  Gr. 6-9

McLaren (author of *Waiting for Odysseus*, BCCB 2/02 and *Inside the Walls of Troy*, 11/96) presents a trio of novellas each featuring a heroine from Greek mythology. These romanticized retellings of the stories of Atalanta, Andromeda, and Psyche reduce character motivation to the mundane: Atalanta doesn’t want to embroider or wear ladies’ fashions, Andromeda dreams of a golden hero rather than an arranged marriage, and Psyche betrays Eros not because she fears for her life but
because she fears her husband may be fooling around with other women. The attempt to make the protagonists’ love lives anachronistically rosy results in tales without tension or pace; the characters are smugly self-aware, and happily ever after is a foregone conclusion. Earnest overexplanation is provided in pedestrian language and clichéd images, and as a result the mystery and beauty of the original myths are lost. An extensive author’s note gives historical and cultural context.

McPhail, David  Edward in the Jungle; written and illus. by David McPhail. Little, 2002 32p ISBN 0-316-56391-9  $15.95  Ad  5-7 yrs

Edward (from Edward and the Pirates, BCCB 7/97) is in his backyard reading about his favorite hero, Tarzan, when he finds himself menaced by a crocodile: “The crocodile lunged at Edward, but at that instant Edward was snatched out of the way by none other than Tarzan himself, and a moment later they were swinging through the trees on a sturdy vine.” After some Tarzanish assistance (including lessons in the production of the Tarzan yell), Edward surprises hunters who have captured the crocodile. Despite his past experience with the beast, “Edward’s heart softened. As unfriendly as the crocodile was, he didn’t deserve to be bound and dragged away from his river home.” Edward intervenes, courtesy of his newly acquired yell, and the hunters let the croc go free. Edward’s previous literary adventures had a flair for the satisfyingly fantastical; this particular outing, however, suffers a bit from clunky, prescriptive motivation: Edward’s willingness to help the crocodile that planned to eat him may not be credible, but it certainly does make a nice message. The acrylic paintings are dark and crowded, and the drafting is clumsy and disproportionate, especially as regards the disappointingly vague wild animals. Still, the combination of Tarzan, jungle yells, and wild beasties will draw listeners into Edward’s imaginary jungle. JMD

Mills, Claudia 7 x 9 = Trouble; illus. by G. Brian Karas. Farrar, 2002 [112p] ISBN 0-374-36746-9  $15.00  Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 2-4

It’s not just 7 x 9 but multiplication in general that is trouble for third-grader Wilson Williams. His whole class has to know their times tables up through the twelves in only three weeks, and while his classmates are forging ahead, Wilson has barely mastered the twos. This basically means goodbye to free time for Wilson, as his parents ensure that he drills and practices (despite the distractions of his younger brother, Kipper) and succeeds, level by level, in achieving the required standard. Accomplished adults may raise an eyebrow at a whole novel devoted to a struggle with multiplication, but Mills’ sympathetic and detailed treatment of Wilson’s travails makes this both a suspenseful and satisfying beginning chapter book. The tone is respectful but also realistically rueful (Wilson “hadn’t liked multiplication an hour ago, and he didn’t like it any more now that his baby brother could do it better than he could”) and amusing (“How many boys in America were at this moment taking a times-table test administered by a beanbag penguin?”). The hamster-drama subplot (the class hamster, whom Wilson adores, goes missing) doesn’t overbalance the main story, and Wilson’s pet-yearning gives his character even more appeal. Karas’ kids have some of the same round-headed gravitas as
Charles Schultz’s, but there’s an offhanded, rough-hewn look to the sketching and textures that brings Wilson’s life even closer to home. DS

Reviewed from galleys  R  2-5

As mother (or perhaps that’s father) rabbit readies her bunny for bed, she tells of the rituals that other animal youngsters follow as they set off on their journey to Nod. The text is standard lullaby fare—tender and soothing but, without a tune to croon along to, a tad flat: “Cats in jammies look to see/ what their bedtime book will be./ A skunk rubs Baby’s back just so/ while Daddy turns the lights down low.” Riley, though, provides the magic touch with her faunal cast, round and plump and textured in fine pencil shading to the velvety softness of a favorite plush toy. Each uncluttered scene highlights a familiar activity with a logical animal twist (squirrel is rocked to sleep in a nutshell cradle; the dog family howls a bedtime song; rabbits gaze at the giant carrot constellation in the deep night sky). And for listeners who aren’t quite ready to cash it in for the evening, there’s a bit of charming goofiness (mice with the “rodental” floss; a ladybug delicately spraying the skunks’ airspace with an atomizer) to end the day with one last giggle. Cuddles are virtually guaranteed. EB

PELLETIER, ANDREW  *Sixteen Miles to Spring*; illus. by Katya Krenina.  Whitman, 2002  32p  ISBN 0-8075-7388-4  $15.95  M  5-7 yrs

Maddy feels that “something was bubbling, something warm and exciting and big.” Her father invites her on a ride to the garden store and off they go, through the melting but still wintry-looking landscape. On the way they meet up with an old jalopy, with the words “Sixteen Miles to Spring” painted on the side. Two men, Wilbur (dressed in bright yellow) and Wiley (dressed in green overalls), climb out of the truck, and in the course of conversation it becomes clear that the two are the harbingers of spring, driving north sixteen miles a day, leaving spring in their wake. Maddy and her father help Wilbur and Wiley toss their magical seeds to the wind, and quick as you can say fertilizer, it’s spring, complete with crocuses, robins, and daffodils: “Suddenly Maddy knew what she had been feeling that morning, what it was she had smelled on the breeze. It was the smell of fresh dirt and new leaves and every sort of growing thing. It was spring.” This obvious, sentimental text gives no sense of the natural wonder of the changing seasons, and the hackneyed language adds little charm. The art is vivid but ungainly: awkward drafting results in twisted faces and disproportionate figures, and the palette is gaudy. A full-page introduction to the science of the changing seasons does little to mitigate the forced nature of this flowery fantasy. JMD

Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 3-6

An assemblage of poems, spirituals, folktales, and historical episodes attest to the “inventive defiance” by which slaves, with no legal rights to their persons, none-
theless claimed full ownership of their own spirits. The approach recalls Julius Lester's *To Be a Slave* (BCCB 4/69), but edited, modified, and heavily illustrated to attract and retain a younger audience. Primary source materials, particularly song lyrics, powerfully convey the grim irony with which slaves regarded their plight ("Dey skim de pot,/ Dey gib us de likker,/ And say dat's good enough for nigger"), as well as the faith in Providence and self-help that impelled many onto the literal road to freedom ("Get on board, little children,/ There's room for many a more./ The fare is cheap, and all can go"). However, Rappaport's retellings from history and lore—which, together with necessary background segues, make up the bulk of the title—seem thin, purposive, and oddly disconnected amid the slaves' own raw, urgent voices. Evans' full-page oil paintings vary in effectiveness, from a dramatic scene placing the viewer among a crowd of prospective buyers at a slave auction, to an improbable depiction of runaways wading effortlessly through an obligingly shallow river beneath the glaring light of a Georges Mélies-styled moon. Older readers are likely to find Lester's classic the more affecting title, but younger children just beginning to shed the image of slave as helpless victim will still find much worth pondering here. End matter includes a timeline, list of sources and titles for further reading, and an index. EB

**ROBERTS, WILLO DAVIS** *Undercurrents*. Atheneum, 2002  [240p]
ISBN 0-689-81671-5  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-9

Nikki is stunned when, eight months after the death of her mother from cancer, her father marries Crystal, a young illustrator. Her pains of bereavement and sudden transition are complicated by puzzlement: Crystal is mysteriously reticent about her past, and Nikki realizes with astonishment that her young stepmother is downright afraid when an aunt leaves Crystal a house on the California coast and Nikki's father decides that the family will spend a vacation there. Crystal's behavior becomes even stranger and more secretive in California; after Nikki's father is forced to leave on a business emergency, an infuriated Nikki refuses to obey Crystal's arbitrary stricture that she quit her job (typing for a neighbor), until revelations about Crystal's past suggest that the darkness that looms over Crystal may now threaten Nikki as well. Roberts is a dab hand at foreshadowing, effectively exploiting Nikki's natural resentment of an abruptly appearing stepmother, and Nikki's essential fair-mindedness (she realizes that Crystal often does get a raw deal in the family) makes her a sympathetic narrator. The payoffs are not really worth the foreshadowing, however, thereby becoming letdowns rather than fulfillment; this is particularly true of the climactic drama, which really has very little connection to the book's buildup and merely offers an overly convenient solution to the problems of Crystal's past. Between an isolated house on the coast, an interloper in the family, and hints of terrible secrets from the past, however, there's still enough pleasingly foreboding atmosphere to entertain mystery fans. DS

**RODDA, EMILY** *Rowan and the Keeper of the Crystal*. Greenwillow, 2002  197p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029777-8  $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029776-X  $15.95
Ad Gr. 3-5

This third entry in the Rowan of Rin series (BCCB 10/01) follows a by-now-familiar pattern: young, timid, unwilling Rowan is anointed as leader of a quest, the successful outcome of which will save his people (his town, his family, etc.).
Rowan’s mother Jiller has kept a terrible secret from him: the eldest of his family is the hereditary chooser of the Keeper of the Crystal, the stone that empowers the coastal tribes and keeps the city of Rin safe. When Jiller is called to choose the next keeper, her firstborn must accompany her, so Rowan once again finds himself on a dangerous journey to fulfill an important mission. In the process of fulfilling her destiny, Jiller is poisoned, and not only must Rowan take her place as chooser, he must find the antidote that will save her. The adventure/quest elements will easily draw readers into Rowan’s neatly evoked world, and the physical trials he undergoes to save his mother offer some satisfying action. Generally, however, this is solid but uninspired, and the pace is on the slow side until nearly midway through the book. Nonetheless, fans of the first two books will settle happily into the novel’s predictability. JMD

Romanek, Trudee  
*Zzz . . . : The Most Interesting Book You’ll Ever Read About Sleep;* illus. by Rose Cowles. Kids Can, 2002 [40p] (Mysterious You)  
Trade ed. ISBN 1-55074-944-7 $14.95  
Paper ed. ISBN 1-55074-946-3 $6.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
R Gr. 3-7

Sherbet-colored spreads, cartoon figures, and text parceled out a few bold-headed paragraphs at a time seem to suggest a breezy little overview for halfhearted browsers. There’s an impressive amount of solid information here on a topic of interest to anyone who’s ever snoozed, though, and children with some natural questions about Dad’s snoring, brother’s sleepwalking, the necessity of regulated bedtime, and the mechanics of dreaming will find some clear explanations—at least, as Romanek has occasional cause to point out, as far as they’re currently known. Prose is kid friendly; sleep jargon (from REM to obstructive apnea) is meted out in manageable doses and accurately defined within the text. While exotic sleep disorders such as narcolepsy and cataplexy are discussed, it’s surprising that garden-variety problems that may be more immediately troubling—bedwetting and wet dreams—are never mentioned. Given the number of research studies to which Romanek refers and the world records, oddities, and health-related recommendations incorporated, one could reasonably wish that source notes or a bibliography had been included. A well-crafted index is provided, though, which report-writers and readers harboring concerns about their own sleep habits will appreciate. EB

Roop, Connie  
*Take Command, Captain Farragut;* by Connie and Peter Roop; illus. by Michael McCurdy. Atheneum, 2002 [48p]  
ISBN 0-689-83022-X $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad Gr. 4-6

In a series of fictionalized letters to his father, adolescent David Glasgow Farragut recounts his first years of adventures in the American Navy, leading up to his capture and imprisonment by the British in 1814. The Civil War naval hero-to-be has a first-rate yarn to spin; as one of the youngest midshipmen ever to receive a warrant, he was virtually forced by nature of his position into command of adult seamen, and through his own prodigious talents and the mentoring of Captain David Porter of the *Essex*, Farragut took his first command by age twelve, as acting captain of a prize vessel. However, the conceit of letters home, written from captivity in Valparaiso, Chile, shows signs of strain. Farragut lamely apologizes for not having written since his enlistment (after all, he’s been pretty busy), and his
detailed explanations of shipboard life and the fortunes of war are surely redundant as addressed to a father who served in the Navy during the Revolution; moreover, his chronologically disjointed narrative is often awkward to follow. The true tale of a boy in command of his elders has enormous appeal, though, and episodic organization and McCurdy’s rousing full-page scratchboard illustrations should entice both armchair seafarers and biography report writers to weigh anchor for this cruise. A bibliography and nautical glossary are included. EB

Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-7

The mill provides half the jobs in East Siena, Ohio (and all the sludge in its river), so when environmentalists close the mill down, lots of folks leave town in a hurry, following rumors of jobs up north. In fact, George’s older sister and her husband decamp from the Versailles Trailer Park before the sixth-grader gets home from school. George is supposed to take the bus to join them, but he instead uses his bus fare to buy an expensive present for a rich kid who was shamed into inviting George to his birthday party, and then he impulsively decides to camp out in the mansion’s boathouse instead of trailing after his family. Once found, George is taken in by the rich Whitfields, one of whom feels like “a jerk” for having (quite implausibly) neglected to consider the socioeconomic consequences of closing the mill. The novel goes downhill once George goes to the wealthy Heights and parts company with the novel’s most interesting character, Lizzie (“Lizard”), a quirky loner who poses the novel’s central question: “Aren’t poor people part of the environment?” Most of the other characters are clichés, particularly the wizened matriarch, Mrs. Whitfield, who tries to “recycle” George, buying him new clothes and (after George wins a class prize for a recycled art project) offering him the art lessons he craves, but rejecting his idea that he learn to fix cars since she wants him to make him “a little gentleman . . . not some dreadful grease monkey.” There is integrity in George’s decision to take his chances with his own family instead of becoming a Whitfield by adoption, but there is too much unfilled emotional space between these lines, and the novel finally reads more like a script. Readers who can fill in these blanks from their own experience may find the novel engaging; others will appreciate the cinematic combination of thematic clarity and wish-fulfillment fantasy. FK


Maggie’s about as resentful as a thirteen-year-old can get when her father moves the family to the raw lumbering boom town of Hinckley, Minnesota, away from her house, friends, and places that keep the memory of her deceased mother close. Maggie may think little of Hinckley, but Hinckley thinks much of itself, particularly boasting an infrastructure that’s the epitome of 1896 technology, with underground water reservoirs servicing a state-of-the-art fire department. It’s all worthless, though, in the face of a wildfire that ravages the deforested, drought-stricken region, razing Hinckley and neighboring towns and decimating the fleeing populace for miles around. Only after Maggie suffers the horror of searching for her brothers among charred corpses and forlorn survivors does she realize that a particular house or town means less than a family still intact. Schultz bases Maggie’s tale on
an actual wildfire that swept through Hinckley, and her reconstruction of the details of the inferno’s course is gripping indeed (“Nine cars and another engine followed them, still out on the trestle—on a burning trestle. . . . If it gave out under the last engine . . . they would all be hurled into that cauldron of fire and lightning and smoke and whirlwind”). So entirely does the fire dominate center stage, in fact, one might just as soon dispose of Maggie and the paper-thin relocation plot altogether. This is stuff few pyrophiles can resist, and Maggie and her concerns won’t get much in their way. An historical note is appended. EB


When a contest is held to find the bugliest of them all, bugs of every variety flock to the excitement. Damselfly Dilly, however, notices something odd: “Those judges have wings/ That are tied to their backs/ with gossamer strings.” Sure enough, the judges turn out to be a gang of hungry spiders, and Dilly’s warning comes just in time to keep the contest entrants from being ensnared in the judges’ web; the bugs then oust the arachnids and declare young Dilly the hero of the day. The story is amusing, if somewhat slight, and although the metric march of the rhyming text occasionally grows tedious, Shields uses the structure to good effect when presenting the punchline (“‘We’ve been flim-flammed, bamboozled, distracted./ Those judges aren’t insects,’ she cried . . . ‘They’re Arachnids!’”). Nash’s gouache and pencil bugs have an appealing visual solidity and a range of friendly expressions that bring to mind the digitally created characters from the movie A Bug’s Life, and viewers will enjoy spotting their favorite bugs on page after page. A set of tear-out trading cards in the back of the book, replete with interesting insect factoids, is likely to disintegrate quickly in library copies. Nevertheless, this buggy story is well suited to creepy-crawly story hours as well as to more in-depth exploration, and young insect aficionados will be all a-buzz. KM


It’s been several months since narrator Jared and his circle of second-best and also-ran chums played a series of pranks on their junior high betters and were horrified to discover their own propensities for violence. Now a shadow Shadow Club has emerged, and blame for this wave of malicious copycat pranking falls on the likeliest suspects—the original Shadow Club members. Jared and companions are forced back into reluctant action, ultimately striking an unlikely alliance with school administrators to unmask the true perps. Whereas the first Shadow Club outing (BCCB 5/88) explored some meaty issues of jealousy, rivalry, and the dark side of human nature, the sequel tosses motivation into the back seat with a quick nod and then turns the headlights on the escalating pranks themselves. A trumpet is crushed, a pet is blown up, food is poisoned, Jared is nearly killed by bees, but in the end it’s disappointing to learn that the villains are no more than clueless kids with a hyperbolic nasty streak. Although this packs less of a punch than the Shadow Club’s debut, readers who think junior high can’t get any worse may relish a glimpse of a school more toxic than their own. EB
Robert Nobel is the weedy kid, known scornfully as “Norbert,” bullied ruthlessly by classmate Johnny Niker, and basically just trying to keep afloat in life. This last goal is complicated when, on a class project at a local nursing home, he’s seized by the demanding Edith Sorrel and ordered to go to a place called Chance House (“You can go there. Walk. It’s not far”). Chance House proves to be an abandoned building, rumored to be haunted by the ghost of a boy who threw himself from the top floor thinking he could fly, and timid Robert finds himself braving the spooky building and entering in a dare with Niker about staying the night there. Edith’s mystery goes beyond Chance House, however, and as Robert grows closer to her, he becomes increasingly involved with her own strange beliefs about herself, her past, and her fate. Singer deftly braids her plot strands together, achieving the difficult feat of making the everyday-life threads about Robert’s troubles with Niker and his issues with his distant dad effectively intertwine with the supernaturally tinged involvement with Edith’s past. The latter plot development is the more compelling for its reticence about the fantasy’s actuality: is there a spooky connection between Robert and the Chance House boy, who proves to be Edith’s late son? Is Robert’s creation of a feathered garment, in response to Edith’s obsession with the Firebird myth, intimately tied to Edith’s well-being? The easygoing, plainspoken style adds appeal and brings the mystically touched story within reach of a broad range of readers. DS

Nine-year-old Ruthie’s usual afterschool care isn’t available when her mother leaves on an unexpected business trip, and, after firing the first replacement sitter, Ruthie’s dad finally settles on sixteen-year-old Alice. Alice opens up a whole new world for Ruthie, one that includes art, fairies, and magic, but also thievery, lying, and the construction of a hyper-elaborate fantasy life. Alice encourages Ruthie to steal—change from her father’s change jar, a crystal apple from her teacher—until the sitter goes too far and convinces her charge to steal a blouse from a store. Security calls Ruthie’s father, who, after retrieving the girls from the mall, fires Alice. A distraught Ruthie discovers what astute readers will already realize: Alice is a troubled girl from a broken home whose pathological lying has already gotten her in deep trouble. This doesn’t have the fluidity and conviction of Jacqueline Wilson’s similarly themed The Story of Tracy Beaker (BCCB 4/01); Smith lays her plot brick by recognizable brick, sprinkling clear foreshadowing and obvious clues throughout regarding Alice’s troubled personality and Ruthie’s easy complicity. There are also some big bumps in the plot, with the first sequence oddly unconnected to the rest of the story, some issues raised but never pursued, and Alice’s final turnaround (she returns a necklace given to Ruthie by her mother) simply not credible. Still, in the midst of what doesn’t work is the thread of a story that does: Alice brings magic into solitary Ruthie’s life and, for a brief time, assuages her loneliness. Some readers will discard the rest of the tangles and follow that thread instead. JMD
Smith, Sherri L. *Lucy the Giant*. Delacorte, 2002 217p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-72940-5 $15.95

Stigmatized for her height and for her status as daughter of the most notorious drunk in Sitka, Alaska, fifteen-year-old Lucy Otsego sees no way out of a dead-end future in a fast-food emporium. While pondering her fate one evening in the airport coffee shop, a freak misunderstanding offers her the chance to make a break for Kodiak, and an even more freakish encounter in a Kodiak saloon leads her to employment aboard the *Miranda Lee*, setting and hauling crab traps in the icy Bering Sea. There Lucy passes as Barb, an adult on the lam from some undisclosed unhappiness, and since the captain of the *Miranda Lee* is more interested in her strength and aptitude than her past, all goes fairly well until the resentment of a male crew member threatens her cover, the captain’s career, and their very lives. Stylistic glitches somewhat mar the presentation: Lucy/Barb’s brief stay (complete with dinner party) in a Kodiak mogul’s mansion is a questionable intrusion in an otherwise gritty and action-filled plot, and the logic-defying premise that Lucy narrates nearly two hundred pages of flashback while drowning is bound to set eyes rolling. Still, this is a quirky and largely successful melding of fairy-tale happenstance with survival adventure, and the determination and pride swelling just beneath Lucy’s lightly self-deprecating tone should win her many cheering fans. EB

Spinelli, Eileen *Here Comes the Year*; illus. by Keiko Narahashi. Holt, 2002 [26p]
ISBN 0-8050-6685-3 $16.95
Reviewed from galleys

In twelve poems, month by month, the year speaks of its January to December cycle personified in natural phenomena (“I am the January dark/ dappled and deep . . .”). Brief eight-line stanzas embrace traditional associations (March wind, April rain, May flowers) as well as a few unexpected pleasures (August meteor showers), expanding them into lyrics of sustained imagery. While the poetic vocabulary occasionally overrelies on the tried and true, Spinelli makes good use of her limited space, producing some felicitous turns of phrase (the November leaves are a “crunchy rumpus of shades and shapes”) and keeping her rhymes unforced and her rhythms fluid. The bright-faced youngsters of Narahashi’s multicultural cast are a bit too sweet to be true, but the watercolors revel in seasonal atmosphere, deftly changing the light from spread to spread (and sometimes effectively exploring the nocturnal world, as with the October’s shadowy view of trick-or-treaters tripping past a rather human-faced house). This has definite performance possibilities, but it will also surely prompt spirited contretemps about what monthly personifications are appropriate ‘round your parts. DS

Stadler, Alexander *Beverly Billingsly Borrows a Book*; written and illus. by Alexander Stadler. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2002 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys

Responsibility lies heavy on the shoulders of young Beverly, who has just received her very own card for the Piedmont Public Library. She’s certainly enjoying her first book, *Dinosaurs of the Cretaceous Period*, building models, copying pictures, and taking her iguanadons very seriously indeed. But when she awakens on the
morning of April 8th and realizes her book was due April 7th, she works herself into a full-scale nightmare-ridden state of angst, convinced that she faces bankruptcy or prison for her tardiness. Beverly is, of course, every librarian's dream—mannerly, bright, conscientious to a fault—one who clearly deserves and gets her happy ending, complete with a delightful and quite logical twist. And who could find fault with her slightly ursine aspect? Certainly not spindly legged, bird-billed librarian Mrs. Del Rubio or the other zanily caricatured animal denizens of Piedmont. Pair this with Barbara Porte's *Harry in Trouble* (BCCB 2/89) and you've got the foundation for an offbeat program on Library Anxiety. EB

**Stevenson, James** *Corn-Fed;* written and illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 2002 [48p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-000598-X $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-000597-1 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-5

In his latest entry in a series of cornily titled poetry collections (*Candy Corn*, BCCB 5/99, etc.), Stevenson offers readers twenty-five more opportunities to share his offbeat perspective on mini-mysteries like “Why Bicycles Are Locked Up” (because “Once a bike has discovered/ What it's like/ To run fast and free / It just might try to escape”) and what you might do with a hydraulic cherry-picker (“Want to take a picture/ of your chimney?/ Want to get your cat Out of a tree?/ Want to get a little closer/ to the moon?”). Dynamic ink squiggles undergird the lucid watercolor illustrations; their composition and placement complements the careful pacing of these free-verse observations, providing visual punch lines (a fork asking a spoon “What does ice cream taste like?”) or just slowing things down so the reader can give these small matters the careful attention they deserve. The use of a different font for each poem does, unfortunately, visually disassociate some poems from their titles (which are all the same size and font, and tucked too tightly into a top corner of the page), but that won't seriously impede readers' enjoyment of this whimsical cornucopia. FK

**Tompert, Ann** *The Pied Piper of Peru;* illus. by Kestutis Kasparavicius. Boyds Mills, 2002 [32p]
ISBN 1-56397-949-7 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

Juana, a mouse dwelling with her extended family in a seventeenth-century Peruvian monastery, recalls how their contented life among the kitchen crumbs was threatened by the greed of a newcomer who brazenly decimated the cheese. The Dominican brothers procure a cat (unsubtly dubbed Pizarro) to rid the monastery of rodents, and now the mice are under siege, cornered and starving far away from their food supply (“We made soup from bits and pieces of sheets and blankets and clothing. My father and I were forced to harvest leather from a belt”). Soft-hearted Brother Martin is ordered to trap and poison the mice, who have now invaded the living quarters, but through his knack for animal communication he keeps Pizarro at bay and leads the mouse colony to safe haven in the barn. This story, “inspired by accounts of an incident in the life of St. Martin de Porres” (no source given), is more fairy tale than saint legend, and those looking for information on the Spanish-African saint will find only a slim offering of fact in the author's closing note. Juana is an able narrator, though, and the mice have a sympathetic, Beatrix Potter-esque charm, hauling their diminutive furnishings from place to
place. Kasparavicius's saint-to-be Martin is no holy-card icon but a gentle, serious man with work-hardened hands and a quietly confident demeanor, who seems to accept calmly any miracle God throws his way. This may not be quite on target for saint report writers, but the combination of mice on the lam and holy intervention is winning and effective. EB

VAIL, RACHEL. Sometimes I'm Bombaloo; illus. by Yumi Heo. Scholastic, 2002 [32p] ISBN 0-439-08755-4 $15.95 Reviewed from galleys Ad 4-7 yrs

Katie Honors is a good kid, if she does say so herself, and her list of accomplishments is long: "I brush my teeth without being reminded too much. I can velcro my own shoes, and put my toys where they belong, including the ones with sixty-four-eight small pieces." Sometimes, though, Katie gets angry with her little brother and she turns into the terrible Bombaloo: "I show my teeth and make fierce noises. My face scrunches tight like a monster's. I use my feet and fists instead of my words. My toys end up all over the floor—and so does my brother." The contrast between the temper and temperate is effectively drawn: Heo's paintings are a cheery assortment of images in springlike colors in the calm scenes; in the angry scenes oranges and reds dominate the palette. Clumsy construction mars the narrative, however, and the list-like approach to temper tantrums is more textbooky than emotionally satisfying. For a less programmatic look at temper and its taming, readers and listeners may want to turn to Bang's When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry (BCCB 4/99) and Blumenthal's The Chocolate-Covered-Cookie Tantrum (BCCB 9/96). JMD

VULLIAMY, CLARA. Small; written and illus. by Clara Vulliamy. Clarion, 2002 32p ISBN 0-618-19459-2 $15.00 R 2-5 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 269, for review.

WALKER, SALLY M. Fossil Fish Found Alive: Discovering the Coelacanth; illus. by Laura Westlund and with photographs. Carolrhoda, 2002 [72p] ISBN 1-57505-536-8 $17.95 Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 4-9

As Western scientists pondered the fossil remains of a fish believed (by them, at least) to be extinct, African fishermen regarded a catch of gombessa with mild disdain ("too oily to taste good"), and raja laut turned up regularly in Indonesian market places. Not until 1939, when a South African fisherman turned over his catch to museum curator Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, was the coelacanth recognized by ichthyologists for what it was, a primitive fish very much alive and well in coastal deep waters better known to local fishermen than to scientists. The coelacanth immediately rocketed to stardom in a drama that would involve international politicking, carefully choreographed scientific courtesies and dirty rivalries, serendipitous discoveries, developments in deep-dive technology, and a tragic death. At Walker's hands the continuing efforts to study the ungainly fish—with its lobed fins, extra "tail," scaly head plates, primitive spinal system, mysterious rostral organ, and bizarre headstanding behavior—unfold into a riveting scientific adven-
ture tale. Readers "learn along" with earlier discoverers about the coelacanth's anatomy, physiology, and habits, amassing at a steady pace the facts that are seamlessly interwoven with the scientists' stories. Illustrations are plentiful and well selected, from a £100 reward poster ("Look carefully at this fish. It may bring you good fortune") to ichthyologist J. L. B. Smith dozing protectively beside his crated and iced specimen. A fascinating selection for report writers, this is an exciting catch for paleontology and nature buffs as well. Source notes are included, along with a time line, glossary and index. EB


Scientist Dr. Clock has created a time machine and, after gathering the necessary accoutrements ("He takes a sandwich. He takes important science stuff. He is ready to go!") zips back in time to the age of the dinosaurs. Upon his arrival he discovers—or is discovered by—a pair of head-butting Pachycephalosauri who seem to think he's a delightful new pet, one that they do not wish to share with each other. As the dinosaurs yank Dr. Clock back and forth, he tries to make his scientific observations, but "it is hard for Dr. Clock to take notes." Finally he escapes, and, with a stern admonition to "pull yourself together, Clock!", he re-traces the dinosaurs' tracks back to the time machine and makes a getaway—into the midst of a medieval jousting match. While the challenge level of this easy reader is generally appropriate for its audience, occasionally Weston relies too heavily on the illustrations to convey somewhat arcane textual implications ("Dr. Clock feels floaty"). The illustrations themselves are streamlined and amusing as the short, balding, and bespectacled Dr. Clock is tossed about like a sack of potatoes between the pop-eyed, boldly colored Pachycephalosauri (who look more friendly than fierce); the scenery is standard dinosaur territory with ferny greens and mud browns predominating against a mostly white background. Despite the book's glitches, Weston's deadpan tone (somewhat reminiscent of Daniel Pinkwater), the appealing subject matter, and comical illustrations will make this title a hit with many young readers. JMH


Six fat rabbits are simply not paying attention and, despite warnings from various concerned fauna, they (nearly) get picked off by a hungry fox: "Six fat rabbits, doing what they please,/ don't see the fox sneak out of the trees.// Run, fat rabbits! Run, run, run!/ That fox wants to eat you, one by one!!// Dinnertime!" One by one the rabbits disappear, until finally only one remains: "One fat rabbit, all in its own,/ out in the dark, a long way from home.// Run, fat rabbit! Run, run, run!/ That fox wants to eat you, little one!!// Dinnertime!" The final spreads reveal, to the relief and delight of young audiences, that the "Dinnertime!" cry is mother rabbit's as she calls her baby bunnies home for dinner ("How many times do I have to say? When it's dinnertime—come straightaway!"); the bunnies have merely been disappearing into their burrow in response to her call. Williams' text is one dandy read aloud: the rhyme is catchy, and the repeated refrain ("Dinnertime!") will be one listeners will happily crow. Argent's watercolors sprawl across the
pages, large enough and clear enough to be seen by a group, with lots of opportunities for counting. Her animals are expressive, with an intriguing toylike solidity: the roly-poly rabbits are playfully daring without being too certain of escape, the fox is ferociously toothy without being too scary. There is enough going on in each spread that the reader may have to point out the compositionally disguised fact of each rabbit's safe departure, but youngsters will relish going back over the images once they're clued into the secret. Cries of "Run, fat rabbits, run!" are sure to echo gleefully from library storytimes. JMD

YOLEN, JANE  Hippolyta and the Curse of the Amazons; by Jane Yolen and Robert J. Harris. HarperCollins, 2002 248p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028737-3  $15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028736-5  $15.95  R  Gr. 4-7

When Queen Otrere gives birth to a second son, she defies Amazon law, which requires his sacrifice to Artemis, and instead charges her thirteen-year-old daughter, Hippolyta, with taking the infant to his father, the king of Troy. After Hippolyta safely delivers the baby to his father, she angers the king so much that she's left as breakfast for a sea monster until she tricks her half-brother Tithonus into helping her escape. The two then go on an Artemis-commanded quest to find the lost city of Arimaspa, in order to lift a curse laid on the Amazons. In the end, Hippolyta defies even Artemis, and she battles Apollo's gryphons to save her half-brother. In this second entry in the Young Heroes series (starting with Odysseus in the Serpent Maze, BCCB 5/01), the authors hit a loping stride into adventure that begins on the first page and doesn't let up until the conclusion. Characterizations in this entry are somewhat deeper; Hippolyta changes because of her experiences in the world of men, and the motivating force behind the actions of the main characters are more self-originating than plot-driven. Granted, the novel is a touch over-plotted, and the dénouement smacks of deus (literally) ex machina (figuratively), but overall the adventure carries the day and the reader. A concluding note, "What Is True about this Story?," discusses the history, mythology, and fantasy surrounding the Amazons. JMD

In the March review of Lee Bennett Hopkins' Hoofbeats, Claws, and Rippled Fins: Creature Poems (HarperCollins), we incorrectly stated that four of the fourteen poems are original to the collection; in fact, all fourteen are original. The Bulletin regrets the error.
Dragan, Pat Barrett *Literacy from Day One.* Heinemann, 2001 118p illus. with photographs

Dragan, a first-grade teacher, clearly and capably lays out her model program for the Overnight Book Program that is the foundation of her reading and literacy curriculum. Driven by its own success, Dragan's program (sending books home with each student every night) has developed into the dominant motivating force in her classroom, with nearly all curriculum elements meeting in this literary vortex. The introduction, which explains Dragan's initial inspiration and subsequent actions, is followed by theory and practice chapters on jump-starting the reading program on the first day of school, saturating the classroom with books of all types, managing the Overnight Book Program, and fostering literacy at home and in the classroom. Concluding chapters focus on concrete classroom activities that can reinforce and enhance the reading experience. While this title is obviously aimed at early childhood educators and teachers of reading, the audience certainly includes librarians who wish to support such a curriculum in the school library media center or who desire to incorporate some of Dragan's literacy-nurturing ideas into the presentation of materials in the public library. An extensive list of reading resources, appendices showing how to make projects mentioned in the text, and an index are included. JMD

Steiner, Stanley F. *Promoting a Global Community through Multicultural Children's Literature;* illus. by Peggy Hokom. Libraries Unlimited, 2001 179p
Paper ed. ISBN 1-56308-705-7 $35.00

This is essentially an extended, theme-based annotated bibliography of materials that can be used in the library, the classroom, and at home to promote tolerance and understanding of different cultures. The selection of materials is rather loosely organized, but the included material will be helpful and easily accessible to professionals seeking to develop curricula. The book is divided into five parts: Ties that Bind; Celebrating Life Around the World; Refugees and Homeless; Nomads of the World; Navigating the Road to Literacy; Books that Bring People Together; and Multicultural Books in a Series. Brief, descriptive annotations include bibliographic information and suggested age and grade levels, and each section ends with "Book Extensions" to further explore the suggested titles and issues. Given the pointed nature of the bibliography itself, it is not surprising that many of the suggested titles are pointed themselves; nevertheless, this is a useful compendium. Resource lists, an author index, and a literature index are included. JMD
SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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

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ADVENTURE: Ibbotson; Malone; McPhail; Rodda; Smith, S.; Yolen
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   Gerstein; Marrin
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   Roop; Yolen
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