PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library Large-scale Digitization Project, 2007.
"Few illustrators can coax quite so much expression and animation from a few dashes of fine brushwork and a smear or two of watercolor fill. Here Cooper's agile shapes spring and dart among sinuous lines of text as dancers who bring a show through four weeks of rehearsal to the opening curtain of a debut. Any reader who would happily trade all the bedroom furniture for a barre will be on Cloud Nine, and listeners whose sophistication has just about outrun picture books will also revel in both the wry humor and the artistry."

—Bulletin Blue Ribbons '01, Starred Review/
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

"A sensitive tribute that goes beyond the usual dreams of pink tutus and toe shoes."

—ALA Booklist

Ages 4 up.
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* Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R Recommended.
Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR Not recommended.
SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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Cover illustration by Ana Juan from Frida by Jonah Winter. Published by Arthur Levine Books, an imprint of Scholastic Press, a division of Scholastic Inc. Illustration © 2002 by Ana Juan. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
Our adult impulse to introduce increasingly younger children to historical personages is not always a wise one, since adult achievements are often too abstract to compress understandably into a thirty-two-page text for an audience that lacks a good deal of the relevant context. Some books have attempted to evade the context problem by focusing on the subject's childhood and by employing a less literally biographical approach. Unfortunately, the result too often is a book about someone who apparently hasn't done anything interesting enough to merit being a book's subject; it's like reading a biography of the kid across the street.

Fortunately, Jonah Winter's *Frida*, an imaginative treatment of the life of Frida Kahlo, avoids these pitfalls. It's clearly not your ordinary biography, providing names and dates to be quoted in reports: it leaves mention of Kahlo's marriage and, for that matter, her last name to the author's note at the end. Instead this is a quietly lyrical encounter with a particular artistic spirit, emphasizing not the traditional measures of achievement but the more personal experiences and impulses that could also drive any reader of the book. Winter (who also chronicled Diego Rivera's life, in *Diego*, BCCB 11/91) writes sparcely yet evocatively in the present tense, describing Kahlo's youth (“Enter, stage left: Frida's imaginary friend. Her name is also Frida”), her constant struggle with pain and disability (“Instead of crying, she paints pictures of herself crying”), and her poignant, individual art. Kahlo's dramatic life makes the narrative compelling even to an audience that knows nothing of her artistic significance: the determined young girl leads a life of suffering that only sharpens her hunger to see and to paint.

Since painting was Kahlo's real language, the visuals here are all-important; fortunately, they rise to the challenge. The text, in delicate, spidery type, appropriately adapts itself to the illustrations, settling onto the backs of photographs, fluttering across curtains, tucking itself into a corner behind Frida's nightstand, hovering through the pages as part design, part information. Juan's note explains that she was inspired by Mexican folk art as well as Kahlo's work in creating her acrylic illustrations, and they've got a slightly softened, wide-eyed air that gives them their own mood rather than being merely imitative of Kahlo. The child Frida has a round yet austere face, her expression distant and her eyes downcast as she focuses on the world of her visions rather than the real world. The rotundity and modeling give her the solidity of a clay figure while the smudgy imagined critters possess a matter-of-fact corporeality. The wise-eyed jaguar, portly demon, and rotund skeleton and their ilk seem like credible and comforting companions on a reality footing equal to the microscope through which Frida looks or the fruit on her table; but then, the fruit on the table includes a beatifically smiling...
tomato and grinning skull-like grapes. Despite the *memento mori* and the unreality, these visions are amiable company, a sharp contrast to the double-spread view of Frida, post-accident, imprisoned in a barren thicket of thorns with the weeping moon behind her and bereft of her fantastical friends.

The book will doubtless prompt some young people to go on to more orthodox appreciations of Frida Kahlo, but it's also a reminder, in both its treatment and its subject matter, of the utility and possibilities of art. Also suitable as a readaloud for creative youngsters (which is pretty much a redundancy), this will lure dreamers with its serenely fantastical view and invite them to dream their own artistry. (Imprint information appears on p. 225.)

Deborah Stevenson, Editor

**NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**ADLER, DAVID A.** *B. Franklin, Printer.* Holiday House, 2001 126p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8234-1675-5 $19.95 R Gr. 5-8

Lives of the nation's founders are the reliable staples of the biography shelves, and all too often they're about as bland as bleached rice. Adler, though, packs enough kick and punch into his account of the Revolutionary statesman to convince readers that the fellow in the wire rims and fur hat is someone worth knowing. The standard information is all here: the printing business, the electrical experiments, the international negotiations, the initially reluctant—then fervent—advocacy for independence, all the items the history teacher expects a student to know. So, though, is the information a kid might actually want to know: Franklin the runaway, Franklin the earthy humorist (sly innuendo concerning melted pants buttons should elicit some guffaws), Franklin the gamester (ambitious kids can try to find the error in the jacket reproduction of his sixteen by sixteen magic square), Franklin the ladies' man (“One evening they played chess while Madame Brillon soaked in a covered bathtub”). Chapters are brief and digestible, chapter source notes are chatty and illuminating, and clear inset reproductions of period newspapers are nothing short of fascinating. Overwrought Frenchmen may have dubbed Franklin “Apostle of Liberty,” but Adler might just convince hard-sell middle-schoolers to call him a pretty cool guy. EB

ISBN 0-439-29657-9 $17.95 R Gr. 3-7

First published in Britain, this collection of over 100 poems features art by nine different illustrators, each handling a different thematic section. Though included poets come from various places, there’s a definite British slant to the anthology,
with contributions from contemporary writers such as Philip Larkin and Wendy Cope, poets past such as John Clare and John Dryden, and stalwarts such as Edward Lear and Robert Louis Stevenson; even Anonymous has an Anglo-Saxon flavor here. While some terms will seem arcane to U.S. readers (and "Chinese Counting" for a nonsense rhyme will raise a few eyebrows), they’ll relish the pleasing exoticism thereby lent to the most domestic of scenes. Difficulty levels of the poems range widely, making this useful for employment with a group varied in age, and there’s plenty of opportunity for readalouds. On the whole, the poems are more sophisticated than the art, a discrepancy that may need to be tactfully handled (readers skilled enough for Siegfried Sassoon may find the picture-book appearance rather babyish). The illustrations vary in quality and suitability as well as style: Polly Dunbar’s sharp, squiggly-lined watercolors are energetically appropriate for the “Stuff and Nonsense” section, for instance, but Ian Andrew’s blurry colored-pencil work lends an unfortunate stodginess to “Uplifting and Brave.” Nonetheless, this is an intriguing gallery of poetic possibilities that will be new to many readers. Indices of titles, authors, and first lines are included.

**Bateman, Teresa**  

While this title shares the same mission as Delno West’s *Uncle Sam and Old Glory* (BCCB 1/00), overlapping on such obvious choices as the Liberty Bell and the American flag, Bateman bypasses some of West’s topics (Smoky the Bear, the peace pipe) and dishes up her own favorites (the Vietnam Veterans and Korean War Memorials, the White House, the Capitol). Each symbol is explained in a brief chapter rather than a single spread; the format is somewhat stodgy, but the line-drawn cartoons, though less refined than Manson’s striking woodcuts for *Uncle Sam*, add a gentle lunacy to the proceedings that kids will appreciate. Historical notables in O’Brien’s signature raccoon-eyed style merengue across the jacket, setting a decided light-hearted tone, but the inner illustrations are as instructive as they are entertaining. Early patriots holding boxes of precut stars and stripes solemnly watch their companion hoist additional cloth strips up the flagpole, comically demonstrating the original practice of adding a bar for each new state; Pierre L’Enfant sprawls on the carpet with his construction set from a Tinker-Toy-styled canister labeled “Capitol.” Report writers who want to get serious can consult an index to access specifics, but it’s the browse-and-skim set who will enjoy thumbing through the *Red, White, and Blue*. EB

**Bible**  

In the ornate language of the King James translation of the Bible, this narrative recounts the last days of Jesus from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; through the last supper, trial, crucifixion, and empty tomb; and on to his final appearance at Bethany, where “he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” No specific Scripture citations are offered, and any child even superficially acquainted with the Passion tale will recognize drastic, and often choppy, abridgment. No mention is made of Jesus’ last meal with the apostles’ being a Passover celebration, no segue connects Jesus’ stoic responses to Pilate and his
condemnation, no criminals are executed at Jesus' side. Intricate illustrations employ thick black lines and panels of paint to evoke English cathedral windows, but they lack the rich luminosity of the translucent medium that inspires them; moreover, the minute detail of glass and leading that blends at a distance is oppressively busy when viewed at arm's length in a picture book. Still, French achieves a reverent mood that has its place in Holy Week observances, and librarians developing the Christian literature collection are likely to recognize this rendition has considerable appeal to patrons looking for a seasonal readaloud. EB

**BILDNER, PHIL**  
*Shoeless Joe & Black Betsy;* illus. by C. F. Payne. Simon, 2002 40p  
ISBN 0-689-82913-2 $17.00 Ad 5-9 yrs

Plummeting from star slugger to an outcast besmirched by scandal, Shoeless Joe Jackson is the eponym for baseball drama, but this tall-tale rendering of his early career zeroes in on the relatively tepid theme of Jackson's persnickety quest for the perfect bat, realized at last in the form of his fabled Black Betsy. Blaming each batting slump and subsequent fall from major-league grace on inadequate equipment, Joe continually consults Ol' Charlie, the consummate craftsman who not only fashions his forty-eight-ounce bats but also instructs him in their care and feeding: "When you get up north to Cleveland, you make sure you wrap her in cotton cloth every night. The South is the land of cotton, Shoeless Joe, and a good Southerner must always be true to his roots." Folksy idiom and repetition brush a folkloric patina over the proceedings, but the slim plotting cannot justify the rambling text; Payne's mixed-media illustrations capture flap-eared, ham-handed Joe at some startling and original angles, but they awkwardly cast the semi-tragic figure in a comic light. Four pages of concluding notes comment on the 1919 World Series debacle that saw Jackson tossed from the pros, and it's here that aficionados will find the satisfying intrigue. Readers sufficiently outraged by Shoeless Joe's banishment can pursue the closing reference (that seems to pass as a wildly biased source note) to his booster club at www.blackbetsy.com and nutz the Baseball Commissioner for Jackson's posthumous reinstatement. EB

**BLEDSOE, LUCY JANE**  
*Cougar Canyon.* Holiday House, 2001 130p  
ISBN 0-8234-1599-6 $16.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

Thirteen-year-old Isabel—Izzie—Ramirez is bored by the prospect of an uneventful summer hanging around the mall, so she starts a one-girl business doing yard work. Working for Mrs. Gray, she gets to know Mrs. Gray's teenage son, Charles, and his friend Sam, who've been intrigued by rumors of a cougar in their Bay Area neighborhood. Despite the skepticism of the wildlife service, Izzie and the boys become increasingly convinced that there is a big cat around, and they're determined to find it—but the boys want to kill it while Izzie wants to save it. The main cougar plot lacks both clarity and drama, since secondary material about Izzie's family, her career ambitions, and her interest in the Gray family often interferes with it, and it's hard to sort out some of the different threads. Bledsoe has created an inviting world, however, with Izzie a member of a warm extended family where cousins are best friends and reliable allies. Izzie herself is an easygoing narrator who realistically combines adolescent gawkiness with good business sense and an appetite for hard work, making her a strong and appealing character. Reminiscent
of Booth’s *Panther* (BCCB 3/01), this will draw wildlife-loving youngsters hoping for a wild-animal encounter of their own. DS


Looking back on his quest to win last year’s third-grade science fair—and a top-of-the-line Hyper-Cross-Functional Bluntium Twelve computer system—computer-crazy Jack shares his retrospective wisdom: “Like I said before, I’m ten now, so I’ve had some time to figure out some stuff. And one thing I know for sure is this: There’s nothing worse than a know-it-all.” Most remarkable for its single-minded focus and crystal clarity, this highly purposive tale is told by the kind of articulate kid grownups too often invent as their spokesperson, and his milieu suffers from generic blandness. Educational content relating to the scientific method is laid out systematically, and the message—focusing on winning takes the fun out of science—comes through loud and clear. Readers will appreciate the tight focus, easy style, and straightforward approach, however, as well as the touches of realistic detail (the impressive list of stuff in Jake’s junk drawer, for example) and perceptive insight about school or family life (some teachers do treat the process of asking and answering questions as if school were a game show and students potential winners and losers). Science teachers looking for an accessible conversation-starter may appreciate Clements’ well-developed exploration of science-project mania and the model he provides for addressing the problem; kids may just enjoy a quick Clements read. Avendaño’s inky illustrations have a pleasing robustness unusual in chapter-book art. FK

Cohn, Amy L. *Abraham Lincoln*; by Amy L. Cohn and Suzy Schmidt; illus. by David A. Johnson. Scholastic, 2002 [40p] ISBN 0-590-93566-6 $16.95 Reviewed from galleys R 6-9 yrs

This latest title in the canon of Lincoln lit strikes an admirable balance between a comprehensive view of the president’s life and the informality likely to engage quite young listeners. Cohn and Schmidt assume an intimate narrative voice, directly encouraging audience response: “See that tall, tall man in that tall black hat? Know who he is? That’s right, he’s the man on the penny.” The chatty tone, which occasionally strays into forced folksiness, helps bring the tragic aspects of Lincoln’s career into child-manageable terms: “People died, too many to count. President Lincoln grieved each one. ‘Sometimes I think I’m the tiredest man on earth,’ Mr. Lincoln said. And he probably was.” There are some oddities in the account—audiences will not hear of the death of Lincoln’s sons Eddie and Willie, the troubled mental condition of his wife, or the name of his assassin, and they will hear (yet again) the misleading claim that his Emancipation Proclamation declared “all slaves free”—but this nonetheless brings Lincoln’s character and early days to fresh and vivid life. Relentless use of soft earth tones for pictures and ecru background for text results in a washed-out effect that’s occasionally tedious, but Johnson’s delicate line and softly stippled watercolor washes, set within a vertically oversized format, accentuate Lincoln’s lanky angularity as his limbs regularly overreach the subtly outlined confines of the spreads. The overall presentation is sensitive enough to move children beyond admiration and toward compassion:
"Imagine. All his life he was so busy he barely had time to take a haircut. Now he rests." EB


Arthur de Caldicot, younger son of Sir John de Caldicot, is determined to become a squire and then a knight. His account of daily life at Caldicot Manor, on the border between Wales and England, is rife with references to the coming new century (the year is 1199), the Crusades, the passing of Richard the Lion-Hearted, the social stratification of the manor’s inhabitants, and the harshness of life without basic hygiene and antibiotics. Merlin, the local mystery man, gives Arthur a magical piece of obsidian that shows the boy images and events in the life of legendary King Arthur that seem to parallel his own life: an illegitimate conception, the death of a brother, an almost fatal sword fight, etc. Arthur’s narration has an earthy immediacy, and the revelations that Arthur is not his father’s son, that mystery man Merlin is the wizard he sees in the stone, and that his future is not necessarily his for the deciding unfold slowly but effectively in this first title in a planned trilogy. The narrative’s separation into one hundred brief chapters somewhat chops up the story; the continuity is further broken up by the side trips into fifth-century Arthurian legend and lore and further complicated because the characters in the obsidian stone’s images of legend physically resemble people Arthur de Caldicot knows in real life. Despite the Arthurian echoes, the book’s real strength lies in its portrait of the twelfth-century knight wannabe and the world that surrounds him, and many readers will be intrigued by this offbeat exploration of the medieval world. JMD

English, Karen *Strawberry Moon.* Farrar, 2001 116p ISBN 0-374-47122-3 $16.00 R Gr. 4-8

On the long car trip from northern California to Los Angeles, Imani’s mother, June, tells stories about the year she spent in L.A. with her Auntie Dot. These richly detailed stories always strike Imani as “bizarre and entertaining,” but now they are more significant: June lived with her father and brother at Auntie Dot’s house when her parents separated, and now Imani is going with her mother and younger brother to stay with her great aunt while her parents “see how it goes.” The distanced tone of June’s storytelling voice reverberates in the close quarters of the car, creating an intimate setting for Imani’s responses to her mother’s revelations and reflections. Southern California—from the perspective of Chicago-born June—was an exotic locale, and her 1960s childhood is similarly strange to her daughter. Both time and place are subtly evoked by the era-bound minutiae associated with universal childhood anxieties and yearnings: kids may not buy grape-flavored “winner suckers” for five cents any more, but they know what it feels like when friends do—or do not—share their wealth. June also provides thoughtful explanations of social phenomena, like the extra emphasis on honesty and respectability understood to be part of the “responsibility of being a Negro.” If one can usefully share an adult perspective on childhood with someone whose childhood is still in progress, this sort of uncompromisingly honest retrospection just might be the way to do it. FK
FELDMAN, RUTH TENZER  Don’t Whistle in School: The History of America’s Public Schools. Lerner, 2001 88p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8225-1745-0  $25.26  Ad  Gr. 5-9

“What am I doing here?” undoubtedly crosses a lot of students’ (and even a few teachers’) minds in the course of a school day, and Feldman’s title hints that it might hold the answer. Beginning with the Latin and dame schools of the colonial period, traversing the ever-expanding opportunities for a lengthened school career, and arriving at our present twenty-first-century configuration, the text is an overstuffed backpack of issues such as minority education, progressive curricula, classroom technology, and student rights. The whys behind each issue are barely addressed, however, and the half dozen chapters that form the bulk of the presentation amount to little more than chronologically arranged miscellany. Readers never learn why a newborn Congress concerned with the education of its citizenry failed to provide for mandatory national education; nor can they delve into the implications of intelligence testing, the growing need for school meal programs, the pros and cons of out-of-district busing, or why, for that matter, the U.S. educational system differs significantly from its European and Asian counterparts. There’s a fair amount of amusing, unsourced trivia, though, and enough geeky-looking sepia-toned photographs (that make even recent history seem far away) to convince students they’re probably better off in the here-and-now. End materials include a selected bibliography and an index. EB

FRIEDLANDER, MARK P., JR.  When Objects Talk: Solving a Crime with Science; by Mark P. Friedlander Jr. and Terry M. Phillips. Lerner, 2001 120p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8225-0649-1  $26.60  R  Gr. 5-10

YEATTS, TABATHA  Forensics: Solving the Crime. Oliver, 2001 [144p] illus. with photographs (Innovators)
ISBN 1-881508-75-7  $21.95
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 5-10

The old fascination with crime-solving and new advances in science combine to make forensic detection an intriguing subject. Friedlander and Phillips focus on various contemporary procedures such as bloodstain analysis, document examination, ballistics, and DNA testing, offering concise and lucid explanations not only of the science but also of the relevant legal concepts. The interwoven narrative of a fictional murder case is cheesily written, providing less interest than the nonfiction text, but it does give readers a chance to see some theoretical employment of the described methods. Working in the format of the Innovators series (see Aaseng’s Construction: Building the Tools of War, BCCB 4/00), Yeatts focuses more on the people behind forensic science and the history of its methods, offering intriguing chronicles of the underappreciated Henry Faulds, champion of fingerprint theory; Mildred Trotter, the original “bone detective”; Alec Jeffreys, the pioneer of DNA fingerprinting; and others. There’s plenty of juice and scandal as well as interesting technical details in the accounts, so this is no dry and mechanical collective biography. The two books are complementary rather than competitive, with Yeatts’ material providing a useful background for the contemporary techniques Friedlander and Phillips discuss. When Objects Talk benefits visually from glossy pages
and color photographs, while the black-and-white images in *Forensics* are often rather washed out; each book has a glossary, bibliography, and index. DS


In eighteenth-century England, a scoundrel named Otis Gardiner and his simple-minded son, Meshak, spirit away the scandalous results of women's folly for a fee: instead of honoring their promise to place the illegitimate babies in the Coram Orphanage, however, they instead bury the infants in unmarked graves. A delusional Meshak saves the infant born of Melissa, a governess' daughter, and aristocrat Alexander Ashbrook, taking the boy to London and turning his care over to the Coram, where he is named Aaron by the staff. Dickensian turns of fate and plot abound: due to the machinations of her mother, Melissa believes her baby was stillborn and that the secret of his birth and her ruin is safe; not even Alexander knows he has a son. Fate, however, brings the main players perilously close and the secrets of the past ever closer to being revealed with every twist and turn. Gavin has put together a raging cauldron of scandal, secrets, and sin, along with a healthy dose of redemption, justice, and fairy-tale endings, and the result is a densely written but immensely involving piece of historical fiction. Readers who appreciate Leon Garfield's historical adventures or Pullman's *Ruby in the Smoke* (BCCB 5/87) will be caught up in the machinations of Gavin's villains, the unswerving loyalty of her heroes, and the serpentine twists of her plot. JMD


Clan Strega-Borgia consists of three children (Titus, Pandora, and Damp), two parents (Luciano and Baci), and one great-great-great etc. grandmother (Strega-Nonna), who has been cryogenically preserved. They live in the castle StregaSchloss (described in *Great Scottish Houses You Can't Afford*), complete with turrets, dungeons, moat, and beasties (dragon, gargoyle, yeti, and crocodile) who defend and protect them. Nanny Flora MacLachlan is a witch in hiding, Signora Baci Strega-Borgia is a witch in training, and Don Lucifer Di S'Embowelli Borgia (half-brother to Signor Luciano Strega-Borgia) is a gangster. The plot is overcrowded, and the novel itself lacks tonal variety; the Mafia and Italian-ancestry jokes wear more than a little thin. Readers will nonetheless relish the breakneck pacing and fizzy blend of ingredients, including some cyber-shenanigans, apparently random magic, a kidnapping, an attempted assassination, and a hyper-intelligent spider who knows how to negotiate the world wide web. Though the wit sparkles only inconsistently, this may satisfy youngsters who like their supernaturalia silly. JMD

**Goodall, Jane**  *The Chimpanzees I Love: Saving Their World and Ours*. Preiss/ Scholastic, 2001  80p  illus. with photographs  ISBN 0-439-21310-X  $17.95  R Gr. 3-6

The oft-biographized Goodall writes in her own words about the primates to whom she's devoted her life. Starting with a brief overview of her childhood on her start
down her unusual professional path, Goodall then focuses on chimpanzees, describing their interactions and sharing anecdotes about some of her favorites in Tanzania's Gombe National Park; she also discusses the plight of chimpanzees in the face of human needs and misuses, concluding with suggestions of ways young people can assist in the protection of chimpanzees and the preservation of vital natural resources. While much of this material is available elsewhere, Goodall's commitment and devotion infuse the volume with energy, and there's an intimacy to her observations that will make readers feel a part of the action. Photographs are somewhat inconsistent in quality (not surprising, considering the number of photographers and the range of time involved), but most are sharp and well composed, set attractively in a clean and inviting layout accented with spring greens that echo the greenery of the chimps' environment. This is more a personal exploration than a hard-science text, but it may be the more appealing for that; browsers may find themselves getting sucked in for a full read and even additional research. End matter includes a diagram of primate classification, a map of the chimpanzee range, information about the Jane Goodall Institute, and a bibliography of Goodall's book and other media material. KM


Two very different books chronicle Shackleton's 1914-1916 Endurance expedition to the Antarctic, recently a popular topic in books for young people (Armstrong's Shipwrecked at the Bottom of the World, BCCB 2/99, etc.). Green's entry catches the spirit of the irreverent "You Wouldn't Want To . . . " series perfectly, with a surprisingly immediate account emphasizing the personal discomforts of the experience ("You try to sleep under the deck, lying on the rocks in a rotting reindeer-skin bag. It is so cramped that you feel like you are being buried alive!"). Her breezy second-person narration puts the reader into the shoes of Captain Frank Worsley, Shackleton's "skipper," who steered one of the small open boats to Elephant Island after the crushing of the Endurance and then helmed the boat that left Elephant Island in search of assistance from the whaling station at South Georgia Island. The illustrations are sympathetic to their bug-eyed caricature sailors, investing them with life and allowing them to blow off steam in pithy speech-balloon comments. The Roops' book is more orthodox, but it's harder going (it's unlikely that it's going to be accessible to many of the second-graders that form part of its ostensible audience) and less cohesive; it's also occasionally plagued by flaws (Sir Ernest is referred to erroneously as "Sir Shackleton" throughout, and one of the illustrations depicts the crew within a snug interior room long after any such interiors were available for their use). There's plenty of detail, however, and the text has a flair for the dramatic chapter-ending that will entice readers to keep sledging onward; the inclusion of on-the-scene photographs help provide
energy lacking from the stiffly drawn contemporary illustrations. Both books have their place, but it's Green's expedition that youngsters really will wish to go on. Maps appear in both titles; Green's also includes an index. DS

HARRIS, PETER Ordinary Audrey; illus. by David Runert. Tiger Tales, 2001 32p
ISBN 1-58925-014-1 $14.95 R 5-8 yrs

There's nobody tougher in Deadwood than Deadwood Deb, five-year-old terror of the West, so when outlaws are expected in town she's the likeliest candidate for sheriff. Unfortunately, Deb's out of town on an alligator-wrestling holiday, so her twin sister, Ordinary Audrey, agrees to step into the breach and make like Deb. The outlaws initially best her, since they see through her ruse, but Audrey manages to outsmart the varmints and send them high-tailing it out of town. While it seems unfair that our heroine's victory depends solely on being mistaken for her sister, it's impossible not to warm to worried little Audrey, whose only previous triumph had been "to out-sick the other kids after eating too much cake at parties," and who's finally galvanized into action when those nasty outlaws wreck her sparkly silver star. The measured highlighting and undifferentiated tones and faces of the computer-generated art unfortunately make Deadwood downright bland to look at, but Runert at least adds some lively ingredients, such as the outlaws' malfeasances (they're rolling the townsfolk in barrels, maltreating a teddy bear, and defacing posters of Deadwood Deb), to the spreads, and the sweeps of scarlet and orange make the pages glow like a western sunset. Like Stanley's Saving Sweetness (BCCB 11/96) and Lowell's Little Red Cowboy Hat (6/97), this has a touch of ornery charm that will tickle many ordinary and extraordinary kids. DS


Verse-wise, we tend to associate Christmas with jingly-bell songs and jingly rhymes, but Harrison and Stuart-Clark's collection of well over 100 poems, almost all likely to be brand new to youngsters, reminds us that plenty of writers have given the holiday a richer poetic treatment. Themes drift easily from wintertime (Theodore Roethke's "The Coming of the Cold") to the secular side of festivities (Brian Moses' "Christmas Day"), from the beasts in the stable ("Made you think well of the human race;/ and that doesn't happen every day"—Elma Mitchell's "The Ox-and-the-Ass's Story") to the beasts on the table ("Every turkey has a Mum"—Benjamin Zephaniah's "Talking Turkeys!!"), from the flight into Egypt (Anthony Stuart's "Whatever Next?") to Santa Claus (John Hegley's "Christmas in the Doghouse") to the new year (Ted Hughes' "New Year Song"). Poets are varied but predominantly British, with names of yore (John Donne, Thomas Crashaw) mixing amiably with names of now (Wendy Cope, Adrian Mitchell—who specifically requests that his poems not be used for exams); mood is also satisfyingly varied, with some entries reverent, some funny, and some even spooky. While overall the collection is a fairly sophisticated read (in general, this is accessible adult-geared poetry, individually there are a multitude of audience possibilities and several Advents'-worth of readaloud opportunities. The sixteen illustrators have differing gifts, but the design is thoughtful and attractive throughout, with poems often imaginatively placed against full-bleed double-page scenes (and, with Eliot’s "Journey of the Magi," dramatically shining white amid complete blackness). Stock up on this
Otis the dog is walking home from the park when a big bully dog rudely insults him ("Out of my way, Big Ears!"), sending Otis into a tailspin of self-doubt about his physical appearance: "My ears were quite large. HUGE, in fact. How had I never noticed?"

Poor Otis becomes despondent, refusing to eat his treats or chase the neighborhood cat, and he hurries home to try out a variety of new "ear styles" ("Should I gel them up?"); nothing seems right, however, and, inconsolable, he retreats downstairs to his bed. Nightmares about enormous ears then disturb Otis’s rest until his young owner, Lucy, crawls into his basket to sleep with him and contentedly praises his ears (they are silky and "fabulous," and they keep her warm). The next morning, Otis bounds out of bed with a new leash on life, and when the same bully dog calls Otis "Fat Face," he is able to respond, "I don’t think so!"

Despite the slightly flat ending, this is a droll, offbeat story that sits up and begs to be read aloud. Otis’s humanlike self-awareness and sensitivity about his appearance are gently humorous, and kids will easily relate to both the name-calling and the anxiety over one’s looks. Harvey’s casual, muted watercolors are occasionally a bit awkward (there are some strange-looking dog feet, for example) but long-eared, brown-and-white Otis is a very sympathetic and personable (doggonable?) figure as he leans sadly against Lucy, poses uncertainly before her mirror, and confidently prances down the park path. Kids will gladly lend an ear to this one at storytime.

Though infatuation with Easter candy has actually been touched on before in children’s literature (see Wells’ Max’s Chocolate Chicken, BCCB 3/89), here that love takes a slightly different turn as young mouse Owen becomes so taken with his yellow marshmallow chick that he decides to save it as a toy rather than eat it. Those who remember tender Owen’s tenacious attachment to his blanket, Fuzzy, from Owen (BCCB 10/93) will find his decision completely in character (and in fact, it is the chick’s resemblance to the yellow Fuzzy that prompts Owen to keep it). Henkes’s minimal text follows a consistent pattern as Owen inspects each goodie in his basket, declares it “his favorite,” and eats it up, until he gets to the beloved chick. Sunny spreads feature pastel-tinted pages (upon which the text is centered) faced with similarly hued images of Owen, his basket, and a few toys against a lily-white background. As usual, Henkes’ jaunty illustrations imbue his mouse characters with distinctive personality, clearly seen here in scenes of Owen joyfully bouncing at the sight of his full Easter basket and gently playing with the marshmallow chick. This little board book is just the right size to tuck into Easter baskets—but parents should be prepared when, after reading, children want to keep their Marshmallow Peeps® as playthings. JMH
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-9

Children's-literature scholar Hettinga here turns to a younger audience, penning a chronicle of the two famous brothers that emphasizes their lives' similarity to the journeys of folkloric heroes. From school to work to scholarship, the brothers encountered tragedy (the deaths of their parents), helpful old women (their aunt, Tante Zimmer), hard work (long labor in the libraries and offices of the Hessian government), and reward (recognition as scholars by the international intellectual community). Hettinga not only provides useful information about the Grimm brothers, he also conveys the complexity of the social structure that ruled the formative folklorists' lives and the impact of political upheaval that changed European history. Each chapter opens with a quote from one of the collected folktales; all chapters are densely illustrated with reproductions of paintings, engravings, and drawings. A brief afterword, an annotated bibliography, lists of the Grimms' publications and a list of the Grimm tales, a timeline, and careful source notes are included; the bound book will contain an index. JMD

HILL, PAMELA SMITH *The Last Grail Keeper.* Holiday House, 2001 227p ISBN 0-8234-1574-0 $17.95 Ad Gr. 5-9

Fifteen-year-old Felicity is accompanying her mother, a professor of Arthurian literature, to an archaeological dig in Glastonbury, England. The discovery of the Grail precipitates Felicity's meeting with the time-traveling Morgan le Fey, subsequent involvement in a plot to rescue the Grail from money-grubbing advertisers led by time-traveling Mordred, and the revelation that Felicity herself is one of the legendary maidens of the Grail, or Grail Keepers. Hill's heroine has a conversational voice that younger readers will be able to follow easily and that older readers will find comfortably casual. The pace is quick, revelations are nicely timed, and characterizations are pithy but solid; subtle (and not so subtle) references to Arthuriana are sprinkled enjoyably throughout. Unfortunately, the novel's logic regarding time travel leaves much to be desired (if the Grail is destroyed in the present, why will that change the recent past? If Mordred is injured in the distant past, before his betrayal of Arthur, does that mean that Camelot doesn't fall?), and the conclusion, though satisfying, is more wish fulfillment than well-developed fantasy. Still, this title is an easy booktalk and an easy entree to the Round Table. JMD


The creative team from *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (BCCB 7/93) turns here to the story of a young girl who escapes from slavery via the Underground Railroad. The narrator describes her experiences in a series of free-verse poems: "Running" ("I'm young/ but my legs are strong./ I can run"); "Waiting" ("All I can do is wait/ for the cover of darkness"); "Watching" ("The others rest,/ while I keep watch for a sign/ from the Underground Railroad—/ and friends who will help us get free"); "Hiding" ("I lie awake wondering/ about others who have hidden here./ I won't ever know their names"); "Traveling" ("Fear is so real, it lies here beside
The poems are somewhat prosy, but there’s a precision and breathlessness in the short lines that adds tension to the already intense situation. Ransome’s oil paintings handle light and shadow with dramatic effect, moving from the hushed darkness of escape to the bright light of freedom. His compositions also skillfully steer the pace, as in the powerful opening spread: three frames bring the small group of runaways increasingly closer to the foreground, the narrator moving forward until, in the final frame, she is the lead runner, looking out at the viewer. Hopkinson’s concluding note provides some historical context for the Underground Railroad and the quilts that were used to guide escapees on their journey.


Sufiya’s life is changed when a villager encourages her to borrow money from the Grameen Bank; after finding the requisite four friends to share the loan and learning the rules of the bank, she’s ready to go. Sufiya changes from a beggar to a successful bangle-seller, and at the end of her year term of loan, she and her co-borrowers decide to borrow again and expand their businesses. The legendary and innovative Grameen Bank is well worth literary explanation, and the book does a good job of simply and clearly explaining the terms of Sufiya’s loan and the benefits the loans confer on these women’s lives. The fictional narrative is stilted and oversimplified, however: there’s no exploration of the unusualness of the Grameen’s approach or even of the lifestyle rules the women learn to get their loan, and the women’s poverty is never effectively conveyed. Howard also avoids mentioning any of the pitfalls of borrowing and lending, making credit seem so safe, simple, and easy that readers will wonder what took Sufiya so long and why other banks aren’t riding this gravy train. The watercolor illustrations are prettified and sometimes awkward (especially with faces and animals), but they’re evocative of daily life in the women’s Bangladeshi village. Ultimately, the subject deserves better than this well-meaning but overdiluted effort, which misses the young audience its formatting suggests by miles while providing insufficient explanation for older ones. A two-page factual Q&A about the story and the Grameen is appended.


In this revision of “Humpty Dumpty,” the ovoid protagonist “did not want to have a big fall.” Though “one friend came to the big, big wall” assuring him that “I will help you. You will not fall,” the giant egg isn’t comforted: the mouse looks “too small.” He feels comfortable enough to jump down to his friends only after a third, more substantial, helper shows up. The plot will unfortunately confuse some youngsters, since Humpty seems to plummet even as he protests, and readers may not be as convinced as Humpty about his friends’ ability to break his fall. Beginning readers will, however, appreciate the repetition and variation within the concise rhymed text. The illustrations emphasize repetition as well, which makes them reassuring if bland: the flower-bordered big, big wall is the solid centerpiece.
of each spread, while some expression and movement are provided by the ever-
changing watercolor sky and the quirky ink outlines of Humpty’s animal pals,
which include a purple rabbit and a more conventional pink pig, as well as the
mouse. This carefully balanced challenge may be just right for newly independent
readers looking for a comfortable jumping-off point. FK

JACOBSEN, RUTH  Rescued Images; written and illus. by Ruth Jacobsen. Mikaya, 2001  92p
ISBN 1-931414-00-9  $19.95  R*  Gr. 6 up

During World War II, Jacobsen spent a beleaguered childhood in hiding; after
being separated from her parents, she was moved from family to family, posing as
a distant relative in one household after another. Her memoir is presented in a
series of vignettes, highlighting bits and pieces of remembered childhood within a
sea of pain and loss. Her occasional reunion with her parents brought her little
comfort (“I felt my only option was to hate my parents. That way I wouldn’t have
to think about their helplessness or worry about them”), and after the war, the
family remained broken; although her parents survived, their relationship did not,
and eventually they each committed suicide (“The Nazis had killed them as sure as
if they had died in a camp”). The book’s elegant presentation dramatizes without
pretifying; mixed-media collages, incorporating family photographs and letters
along with images of wartime Europe, accompany the text. Jacobsen layers these
images with thick paint strokes to create rough surfaces, rife with visual interruptions
and a sense of fragmentation that echoes the metaphorical fragmentation of
Jacobsen’s childhood. Although there are many Holocaust memoirs available for
young adult audiences, this one stands out for its moving marriage of art and text
and as a chilling reminder that the effects of the Nazi regime extend far beyond the
barbed-wire fences of concentration camps and gnaw at the lives of so-called
survivors. KM

LASTER, ERIC  The Adventures of Erasmus Twiddle: Grmkville’s Famous & Tal-
ented Not-Detective; illus. by Amy Abshier. Simon, 2001  [208p]
ISBN 0-689-84245-7  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 4-6

Erasmus Twiddle—the “Famous and Talented Not-Detective”—is Encyclopedia
Brown scripted by Monty Python. Though he solves mysteries for the folks and
fantastic creatures (readers who need help imagining what a rabbit-hippo looks
like can refer to the appropriate line drawing) living in and around Grmkville, he
eschews the title of detective: “Anyone can be a detective. All they have to do is
send four bottle caps, three proof of purchase seals from their favorite cereal, two
AA batteries and one rattlesnake skin to P.O. Box 12345.” Frame-breaking but
not ground-breaking, most of the humor in these mildly postmodern stories seems
forced or familiar, and the running gags (like the sidekick who emotes “Verily and
forsooth” in a pseudo-Shakespearean style) run out of steam long before they reach
the station. The Not-Detective’s adventures nevertheless contain some original
moments: in the course of one oft-interrupted case, the narrator introduces the
reader to a page containing two columns with simultaneous plot lines by explain-
ing that although the characters are going their separate ways, we “are special and
can follow them both at the same time.” “The Case of the Rubber Chicken”
teaches a more important lesson: “A rubber chicken cannot do anything but flop
around. And even this it cannot do on its own. . . . It looks funny when it flops and it might make you laugh, but remember, you are making yourself laugh.” Despite the book’s flaws, moments like these may well capture the fancy of precociously sophomoric readers who like to giggle at humorous names and agree that “sometimes poop is really, really funny.” FK

LEVINSON, NANCY SMILER  

Few commanders, save perhaps Odysseus, conducted their fleets through more mysterious waters, toward a more coveted goal, and with a more tragic and triumphant outcome than Portuguese explorer Magellan. This biography traces his life through his rise in the Portuguese navy, through his disfavor at court, to his repatriation in Spain and the famed mission that forever changed the worldview and economic aspirations of sixteenth-century European superpowers. The tale is awash in drama that should be hard for a middle-schooler to resist—political treachery, mutiny, piracy and warfare, religious fanaticism, storms, diseases, and ultimately Magellan’s own death in battle. Levinson notes the strengths and limits of various extant accounts of the voyage and offers intriguing evidence that it was probably Magellan’s slave Enrique (not the mutinous Elcano, who brought the last battered ship limping into port) who was the first person to circumnavigate the globe. Justifiable admiration for Magellan’s accomplishments, however, is too frequently couched in melodramatic language and sporadic outbursts of adulation: “Magellan was said to be ‘at one with his men,’ since he endured the hardships alongside them and never complained. True, he was a harsh and ruthless commander, . . . but he was also a man of his time and, in the end, a hero of his age.” Nonetheless, most readers will skim easily past any overblown rhetoric and simply enjoy the adventure. Source notes, chronology, bibliography, index, and black-and-white illustrations are included. EB

LOCKER, THOMAS  

Another in Locker’s series of lyrical tributes to the wonders of nature, this entry salutes the beauty of mountains and the geologic processes that create them. Although not always scientifically exact, the text is filled with appealing literary images of mountain creation (“Shy dome mountains bubble up/ underneath older mountains”), and the spare but lilting poetic prose will lend itself easily to being read aloud. Unfortunately, this is often pretty rather than substantial, with the poetic license leading to confusion as well as creativity; the book doesn’t quite manage to synthesize its aesthetic and scientific impulses. Locker’s illustrations offer fairly traditional and sometimes clichéd depictions of rocky vistas lit by crimson sunsets or pale morning and enveloped in soft haze, befitting the majesty of the subject matter. At the end of the book, each illustration is reproduced in miniature along with a more comprehensive textual explanation of the mountain type shown. This might be a useful entry in a story hour, but it will more likely play a role in the elementary science classroom, where its aesthetically engaging approach may serve as a welcome complement to other materials on geology. KM
LONGFELLOW, HENRY WADSWORTH  The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere; illus. by
Christopher Bing. Handprint, 2001  34p
ISBN 1-929766-13-0  $17.95 R Gr. 5-9

Following the critical success of his Caldecott honor illustrations for Casey at the Bat (BCCB 1/01), Bing takes on another venerable American ballad. Although fashioned with the same obsessive care as Casey, this title is less inventive in approach. A "fancifully recreated" letter from British General Gage to his captain folds out from the front endpapers and a map of the proposed advance on Concord precedes the title page, setting the stage for the action to follow. Sections of Longfellow's poem then appear in period type along the edge of each double spread, while luminous ink and watercolor "engravings" depict Revere and his fellow Patriots pursuing their reconnaissance and alarm mission. Although Bing presents the whole as a leather-embellished, age-spotted scrapbook, with torn and yellowed shreds of documents and artifacts pressed within its pages, he makes no effort to conceal his own role in the scrapbook's crafting. Fully two pages of "miscellany" comment on the historical veracity (and lack thereof) of Longfellow's spin on Revere. Another double spread contains notes on illustration techniques, a heavy-handed tribute to his mother's career as a social-studies teacher ("She often feels the need to wrest the lies that are legacy and power of arts' interpretation of history out of deeply-rooted places in her students' minds"), and a copious list of thanks and acknowledgments worthy of the Academy Awards. A second map of the route taken by Revere and his fellow riders and a foldout "corrected draft" of Revere's deposition to the Provincial Congress on the back endpapers attempt to reestablish authenticity, but by then the game is up. Bing has chosen to play the myth-debunker, and this undeniably attractive effort therefore seems more at home in the 970s than the 811s. EB

MANNS, NICK  Operating Codes. Little, 2001  182p
ISBN 0-316-60465-8  $15.95 R Gr. 6-9

A house shrouded in fog, mysterious footsteps in the night, a small child's inexplicable fears—ah, it's good to be back in ghost-story country. Or at least it's good if you're the reader, but for fifteen-year-old Graham, who's trying to puzzle out the reasons for the strange phenomena in his family's new home and the abandoned army camp nearby, it's unsettling indeed. His parents don't see the ghosts, his mother being a sound sleeper and his father obsessed with the software engineering for a new military airplane, which has got various countries' defense contractors drooling in anticipation. It's therefore just Graham and his five-year-old sister, Matty, who begin to put together glimpses of a past tragedy: in World War I, the house was the center for military experimentation of deadly gas on prisoners, and when a young orderly felt honor-bound to reveal those tests to the nation, he was court-martialed and summarily executed. When Graham's father's defense software appears on the Internet "in the interests of world peace" and he finds himself on trial for breaching Britain's Official Secrets Act, Graham fears that history will repeat itself. The documentation for Matty's interview with a psychologist is extraneous and the conclusion doesn't really tie up the ghost story as well as the contemporary drama, but Manns knows his ghostly stuff. The book offers both a credible reason for the haunting and a nice line in spooky details, often enticingly placed as chapter endings ("For outside, down below, in the empty courtyard was the sound of marching men stamping their feet in unison over the gravel"), and
the ethical issues raised are genuine and provocative without being overemphasized or overpolarized. This is a satisfying tale with old-fashioned style and a contemporary edge.

**Marsden, John**  *The Night Is for Hunting*  Houghton, 2001 246p
ISBN 0-618-07026-5  $16.00  R  Gr. 7-10

It's been a fictional year (and a half dozen novels) since narrator Ellie and her high-school mates were transformed in a heartbeat from outback campers to Aussie freedom fighters. The latest title in the *Tomorrow, When the War Began* series (BCCB 4/95, et al.) finds the five survivors caring for a band of "ferals" they plucked from an enemy raid and spirited back to their bush outpost in Hell. The children's leader, a resourceful, charismatic deaf boy named Gavin, is initially loathe to share his power with the teenage strangers, but after leading his own group astray in the bush with tragic results, he comes to tenuous terms with Ellie's crew and even helps save their lives when a food raid goes terribly wrong. This isn't quite as fast-moving as Marsden's earlier works, as the teens are held back a bit—both literally and figuratively—by the younger kids, and Ellie engages in more than her customary share of introspection. Readers who rely on Marsden to deliver screenworthy action scenes won't be disappointed, however, and the sure setup for the next novel ("'All right,' Colonel Finley said. 'We're heading into a critical time. I want to ask for your help again...' 'You've got it,' Homer said") should have 'em lining up at the reserve desk.

**Martin, Ann M.** *Belle Teal*. Scholastic, 2001 214p
ISBN 0-439-09823-8  $15.95  Ad  Gr. 4-6

It is the fall of 1962, and Belle Teal Harper and her friend Clarice are thrilled to be in popular Miss Casey's fifth-grade class. On the bus ride to school it appears that their biggest problem will be stuck-up new girl Vanessa Mathers, who looks down on Belle Teal because she's poor. The children are in for a surprise, however: parents are blocking the school entrance to protest the three "colored" children who will be attending the previously all-white school. When African-American Darryl Craig arrives in her class, Belle Teal gets a first-hand view of just how nastily insidious racism can be; when her friend Little Boss' abusive father starts a one-man crusade to drive out the new students, the situation turns downright dangerous. Martin writes with her usual accessibility, and the book effectively combined the ordinary details of everyday life with the larger issue of racism. Unfortunately, the plot is predictable (Belle Teal makes friends with Darryl; Vanessa reveals herself to be pretty on the outside and ugly on the inside) and messagey, sacrificing reality (Belle's mother is the epitome of enlightened poverty, and Belle Teal herself is more than a little too good to be true) to its purpose. Still, this is an approachable piece of historical fiction that, despite its tendency toward wishful thinking, looks at the ugliness of racism without flinching.

**McCully, Emily Arnold**  *The Orphan Singer*; written and illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Levine/Scholastic, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-439-19274-9  $16.95  R  7-10 yrs

It's the early eighteenth century in Venice, and the poor but musically talented Dolcis (Mama and Papa Dolci and son Antonio) sadly decide that they should give up baby Nina to the *ospedalo*, a welfare institution in which foundling girls
receive “the best musical training in Europe.” Raised by the older girls at the ospedalo and visited frequently by the Dolcis (who don’t reveal their true identity), Nina (now dubbed Catarina) quickly rises through the ranks of young singers. When Antonio becomes gravely ill, Catarina risks expulsion by leaving the grounds to visit him (she is later commended for her kindness rather than cast out); a happy ending finds Antonio recovered and the elder Dolcis well provided for thanks to the earnings of opera star Catarina, who finally guesses the truth about their relationship to her. The plot is predictable and the writing a bit bland, but Catarina’s orphan-like status and the rags-to-riches plot may still please readers with a taste for orphan stories and fairy tales. The exotic setting has appeal as well: McCully’s watercolor and tempera illustrations depict the ospedalo as a secluded place bustling with warmth and activity as the scarlet-robed girls go about their regulated day; the shadowy nighttime scenes of lamp-lit streets and canals are romantic and alluring. An author’s note provides additional information about the ospedali of Venice. JMH

Meister, Cari J. K. Rowling. ABDO, 2001 24p illus. with photographs (Children’s Authors) ISBN 1-57765-482-X $13.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

R. L. Stine. ABDO, 2001 24p illus. with photographs (Children’s Authors) ISBN 1-57765-484-6 $13.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

With Goosebumps continuing its steady roll off the library shelves and Hollywood fanning the flames of Pottermania, there’s no question that primary-grade biography-report writers (and perhaps some recreational readers as well) will grab these titles as first choices. While they do package a creditable amount of information into an unintimidating format, their overall appeal is limited by Meister’s choppy writing and propensity toward odd non sequiturs: “One day in 1990, the train [Rowling] was riding broke down. As she waited, Joanne stared out the window at some cows. Suddenly she had an idea for a new story. She would write about a young wizard”; “Then Bob [Stine] created another humor magazine for Scholastic called Maniac. And in 1980, his son Matthew was born. But five years later, Scholastic couldn’t afford to make Maniac any more.” Both titles are already dated, mentioning the Harry Potter movie as still in the planning and citing Goosebumps’ status as the world’s top-selling children’s book series from Guinness World Records 2000. True fans probably won’t care, though—color portraits are inviting (Stine’s poses with his monster realia are winners), challenging vocabulary defined in a glossary, and official websites are listed. Twenty quick pages later, kids can get back to the novels. EB


While Meltzer does provide a section on forensic science, this title differs from Friedlander’s and Yeatts’ books, reviewed above, in its focus on detective work in general, both public and private. The book begins by discussing the nature of investigation (and the importance of luck), then goes on to discuss details of detection, types of crime, different types of detection (including the Pinkertons, corporate espionage, and investigative reporting), and the results (some now questioned)
in court. The book covers a surprisingly wide variety of material, and it’s refresh-
ing to see open acknowledgment of the political aspects of these matters (there’s mention both of Pinkerton’s radical roots and the agency’s famous union-busting, for instance); readers will particularly appreciate the lively and colorful quotes from detectives about the realities of the work. The material isn’t well synthesized, however, with sections and even sentences often choppy and disjointed; the politi-
cal assessments sometimes seem more interjections than components of a focused approach. The tasty frontline tidbits and browsably brief chapters will nonetheless lure kids interested in crime-solving, however, and they may be sufficiently in-
trigued to proceed to Friedlander’s and Yeatts’ more specialized titles. Black-and-
white photographs and gray-boxed sidebars are visually stodgy, but they provide additional insight and information; an extensive bibliography and an index are included. DS


Molly lives with her wealthy mother, her cat, Slim Enid, and housekeeper, Eunice. Lucky Molly has a ratty old dress she considers magic; when she says the words “Perfect dress in a perfect world, take me into another whirl” she can be anyone she wants, including a mayoral candidate. Attending a wedding reception at the posh Knickerbilt club, she encounters a homeless woman and gives her the magic dress; the woman jokingly wishes to be the queen of England, and lo and behold, she is transformed, just in time for the arrival of Molly’s mother and other wed-
ing guests. The story of Molly and her upper-class lifestyle is a throwback to Thompson and Knight’s Eloise, but it lacks Eloise’s rip-roaring charm and sensible point of view. The fairy-tale ending breaks all the rules of fantasy: is Molly’s dress really magic? Are the imaginary changes she experiences real all the time, or do they only become real at the end when the homeless woman gets new clothes? The book treats the rules of reality rather lightly as well: just add a little magic and faster than you can say bibbity bobbity boo, the problem of pervasive poverty and homelessness is solved. Miller’s watercolors feature fashionably elongated figures, but the illustrations are nonetheless surprisingly unstylish, with flatly cartoonish tendencies and little interplay with the text. For a more involving picture book dealing with homelessness and privilege, turn instead to Eve Bunting’s December (BCCB 12/97). JMD


O’Brien close-hauls through centuries of seafaring, featuring twenty ships that made maritime history. Each famous craft receives a double-page spread—the right-hand page comprises a slim account of the ship’s significance, a small sketch of the ship in profile (the better to appreciate its rigging), and an inset picture displaying a bit of ship miscellanea; the facing page offers a splendidly rendered painting of the ship in action. Endpapers are used to advantage; side-by-side ships drawn to scale sharply contrast the diminutive Golden Hind with the far grander
Victory; Cheng Ho’s massive fifteenth-century treasure ship with its poorer cousins from the same century, Columbus’s tiny caravels; the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise with the submarine Nautilus. True salts will probably wish for more technical detail, and history buffs may already know more tidbits about their favorite vessels than O’Brien serves up here. This nonetheless puts “faces” to some famous nautical names, and mighty handsome portraits they are. “Where Are They Now?” data is also included. EB

ISBN 0-689-84148-5 $16.00
Reviewed from galleys

Tracy was initially optimistic about working alongside Kevin, a cute guy in her freshman class at the science center; Kevin’s there on community service after stealing a car, however, and he proves neither a cordial companion nor a reliable worker. Kevin’s point of view, on the other hand, reveals that he’s despairing of his remarkable tendency to screw things up, especially in front of Tracy, whom he’d like to impress. When rising waters drive many of the town’s residents from their homes, Kevin and Tracy join Tracy’s older brother, Luke, in a powerboat run to help out a few flood victims, but their errand of mercy turns dangerous when the three kids encounter opportunistic and armed burglars looting the abandoned houses. Petersen (author of *I Hate Weddings*, BCCB 3/00) doesn’t write here with the verve he displays in his books for younger readers: the plot is pure Trixie Belden, the character growth is predictable, and the shifting third-person viewpoints between Tracy and Kevin are sometimes confusing. Trixie’s exploits were popular for a reason, however, and the book plays satisfactorily on the kids vs. crooks drama, making the most of the watery atmosphere and the exclusion of adults from the scene. Ultimately, this has more realism than and the same appeal as Willo Davis Roberts’ tales of kids fighting crime, so *Rising Water* should make a splash with her many fans. DS

PLATT, RICHARD *Pirate Diary: The Journal of Jake Carpenter*; illus. by Chris Riddell. Candlewick, 2001 64p

Nine-year-old Jake and his Uncle Will sail with the Greyhound, a smuggling vessel out of colonial North Carolina, and it soon becomes evident that Jake must struggle not only to learn the ropes of seamanship but simply to survive the captain’s brutal treatment. When the Greyhound is boarded by pirates, the crew is so relieved with the prospective change in command that they collude in the seizure and, following pirate custom, soon elevate their own first mate to rank of captain. From there on, Jake’s maiden voyage is relatively smooth sailing; the rookie pirates line their pockets with Spanish gold with remarkably little bloodshed, they conclude their piratical adventures amicably by taking a well-timed King’s pardon, and Jake joyously reunites with Will (who was rescued after being marooned in a rowboat by the Greyhound’s original captain). Sure, given the bloodthirsty nature of piracy, it’s all a little too good to be true, but Jake’s narrative voice is so credible and likable and his observations so thoroughly engrossing that readers will give contrivance the wink. Oodles of information on everything from articles of piracy to navigation by dead reckoning is effortlessly incorporated, and Riddell’s ink and watercolor pictures are both convincingly detailed and deliciously overdrawn. Readers who
are 'pressed aboard as report writers will find notes on the history of piracy, a glossary/index, and a bibliography useful; most kids, though, will simply sign on for the adventure. EB


Maurice, a voluble cat, Keith, a talented piper, and a band of highly intelligent talking rats arrive in Überwald to work their latest (and last) Pied Piper-esque con and instead become embroiled in local politics, thanks to the interference of the mayor's highly imaginative daughter, Malicia. The discovery that the town rat-catchers have been stealing money, hoarding food, and breeding rats results in an underground battle of epic proportions, ending in the overthrow of the malevolent, mind-controlling Rat King, who planned to slaughter the townsfolk and take over the town. Pratchett, well known to adults for his Discworld series, leaves none of his wit behind in this exploration of Discworld for younger readers. He draws loosely from the legend of the Pied Piper but inevitably adds his own original spin, examining the ethical dilemmas of the sentient cat and rats as they join with the humans to physically battle forces of evil (both human and rodent), undergo painful emotional changes, and confront the concepts of the individual self, the soul, mortality, God, and the afterlife. Fantasy readers familiar with Discworld will happily re-enter it here; those unfamiliar will find this novel an easy access point. JMD


While dumping her alcoholic dad's beer bottles into the recycling bin, Natalie is approached by a strange man who claims that she has magical powers, that the shiny wrapper she picked up is really a recycled spell, and that she is just who he needs to complete his Spellclave (a sort of magicians' coven). Being a bright girl, she flees, but when she sneaks out of her house for an early morning walk she meets that same man again, and he kidnaps her. After being drugged and imprisoned, Natalie escapes by pretending to go along with the plans of her captor, Lord Hawk, a Spellmage who needs her help to attack the magical, parallel world of Earthaven. The battle between Hawk's Spellclave and Earthaven's mages spans both the human and mage worlds and involves Natalie's stepbrother, her best friend, the magical spirit of her dead mother, and her new familiar, T'Anaquin, a magehound. Despite a promising opening, the plot quickly becomes overcrowded, and the momentum lags. Both individual characters and parallel world are shallowly constructed, and the internal logic of the conflict never asserts itself. Still, the book is replete with popular fantasy elements (unicorns, kid magicians, etc.), and younger readers may find that a sojourn in the woodsy realm of Earthaven is an easy detour from less accessible fantasy. JMD

Roop, Connie  Escape from the Ice: Shackleton and the Endurance.

See Green, p. 205, for review.
SCHAEFER, CAROLE LEXA  *The Little French Whistle*; illus. by Emilie Chollat. Knopf, 2002 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  R 4-7 yrs

When Louie comes to visit his cousin Josette, he brings along a "little French whistle . . . Grand-père bought for him in Paris, across the sea." Predictably, spoiled Louie refuses to share with Josette, instead blasting his whistle at birds, Fon-Fon the dog, Grand-père, baby Roland, and Sheba the cat, who makes her displeasure known with a feline hissy fit. Louie’s mother takes her beast of a boy home in a taxi; Josette retrieves the dropped whistle and she takes a turn, blowing softly and sweetly. When Grand-père needs a taxi, however, Josette blows the whistle "like Louie—important, snappy, and grand." Schaefer delivers a snappy little story, sprinkling Josette’s narration with French words that add to her dry and slightly Gallic delivery. Chollat’s polished illustrations feature chunky, new-wavy figures with subtleties in light and shadow that add depth to the images. Audiences will appreciate the momentum of the text and the airy feeling of the pictures, and if a whistle finds its way into storytime, well, blow softly and sweetly, like the story says. JMD

SCHANZER, ROSALYN  *Davy Crockett Saves the World*; written and illus. by Rosalyn Schanzer. HarperCollins, 2001 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16991-0  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R 5-7 yrs

This original tall tale features coonskin-capped Davy in an epic battle against the menace of Halley’s Comet, which appears to be hurtling directly towards earth. Panic among the populace grows (illustrations depict an appalled multi-ethnic cast of Americans in historical dress, looking at the sky in horror as the comet approaches); meanwhile, the president places want ads in papers across the country, seeking Crockett’s help. Unfortunately, the battle is slow to ensue, and an intervening three-page digression of Crockett’s preparation for courting Miss Sally Sugartree stalls the story rather than adding suspense. However, once the larger-than-life hero meets the menacing ball of icy fire, the plot streaks to its triumphant conclusion. Schanzer caps her tale off with a *pourquoi* ending explaining why Davy always wears his coonskin headgear. The illustrations combine elements of folk art with cartoonish exaggeration, both of which fit well with the pseudo-historical setting. Bold, flat panels of color contrast with the figure of muscular hide-wearing Davy as he wrestles the comet into submission. Tall-tale aficionados will be more than ready to face danger with Davy. KM

SCHMIDT, GARY  *Mara’s Stories: Glimmers in the Darkness*. Holt, 2001 149p
ISBN 0-8050-6794-9  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 7-10

The setting for this collection of reimagined traditional tales is a Nazi concentration camp barracks where Mara, the storyteller, gives the female prisoners some respite from horror with her stories. Though the frame is weak and unnecessary, Schmidt’s retellings are succinct and dramatic; stories of miraculous endurance, impossible escapes, and final redemption are presented with a brevity that never undercuts their power. Themes of hope and horror and a strong sense of mysti-
cism predominate, not surprising given the Hasidic origins of many of the tales. Notes are extensive, with the author citing the sources that inspired him and also often explaining the changes he made to the stories. The stories all have the punch of longer, less accessible material dealing with the Holocaust; the impact may send readers on a search for Schmidt's sources, as well as a search for the commitment to faith the author so capably evokes.

SEIDLER, Tor  
_The Revenge of Randal Reese-Rat_; illus. by Brett Helquist. Farrar, 2001 233p ISBN 0-374-36257-2 $16.00 Ad Gr. 4-7

World traveler Elizabeth Mad-Rat voyages from New York City to Africa to reunite with her musically talented daughter, Maggie, convincing Maggie to return to New York City for the wedding of her cousin Montague Mad-Rat (hero of _A Rat's Tale_, BCCB 2/87) to Isabel Moberly-Rat. The story’s action really starts on the day of the wedding, when Randal Reese-Rat, formerly affianced to Isabel, recovers enough from poisoning to realize that his beloved is marrying a (shudder) Mad-Rat. A mysterious fire nearly does in the newlyweds; Randal is mistakenly suspected, and a bounty is offered for his capture. Disguised as Gregory Sad-Rat, Randal meets musical Maggie, discovers their mutual love of all things African, and falls for her charms. Readers may need to read the first book in order to fully appreciate the complexity of Seidler’s rodent-world, and the eccentric characterizations aren’t always enough to carry the unhurried, somewhat meandering plot. It’s still an intriguingly realized milieu, however, and the gothic elements add zest to the fantasy. Helquist’s black-and-white illustrations, scattered throughout, provide an evocative setting for the action and a suitable backdrop for the playing out of the characters’ destinies. Fans of the first book may want to revisit Seidler’s rodent-ridden Big Apple.

SHEPPARD, Mary C.  
_Seven for a Secret_. Groundwood, 2001 189p Trade ed. ISBN 0-88899-437-0 $15.95 R Gr. 8-12

Trouble looms when a stranger comes to town and offers fifteen-year-old Rebecca an opportunity to leave her tiny Newfoundland village (where the residents are—in 1960—still living without electricity) and take art lessons in Boston. Actually, the trouble started years ago, when Rebecca’s mother, Grace, went off to Boston to do war work and fell in love with a painter: nobody—not even Grace’s husband—knows that Rebecca is really the painter’s daughter, until the truth is discovered by Rebecca’s sixteen-year-old cousin Melinda. Without melodrama, Melinda’s narration effectively illuminates the social, familial, and sexual tensions that entangle Rebecca and Melinda and even their city-dwelling cousin Kate, torn between marriage and education. In the end, Melinda’s choices narrow when a condom fails and she gets pregnant after a one-time fling with her true love; at the same time, in gratitude for sacrifices Aunt Grace made for her and her family, Melinda agrees to help keep Aunt Grace’s secret by discouraging Rebecca from leaving Newfoundland—at the price of Rebecca’s happiness. These frustratingly realistic pre-feminist choices will fascinate readers drawn into the novel by the mild exoticism of the isolated setting, where times change slowly and the locals still relax with a “mugs up” after a hard day’s fishing or working at the cannery, and their teenaged daughters—for whom change came too late—price mail-order wedding dresses.

FK
SHIELDS, CAROL DIGGORY  

Dished up in an appealing format (a tall, skinny trim and a reliance on foldout illustrations), these collections of brief verse give various animals a chance to discuss aspects of their lives. *Homes* roots its poems in fact, featuring hive-dwelling bees, a koala perched in a gum tree, a mole with a happy underground existence, and so on. *Sports* is more fanciful, featuring a basketball-playing giraffe, a soccer-goalie hippo, a snow-skiing duck, and others. The tetrameter couplets offer some entertaining ideas and pithy rhymes, but they're often uneven, lacking the control that Florian musters over his zoological poetry (*Lizards, Frogs, and Polliwogs*, BCCB 4/01, etc.). The *Sports* poems also lose relevance by leaving reality behind, but they never make the imaginary athletics a sufficient substitute, since they seem either randomly or conveniently chosen. The foldouts on each recto have a touch of guessing-game appeal, since each poem's speaker remains concealed until the last line of his or her verse, and Junakovic has conceived the spreads so that they're coherent both with the flap closed (when, say, the archery target appears merely to sport feathered arrows) and open (when it reveals a swordfish stuck into its bullseye). Generally, though, there's little mistaken-identity cleverness with artistic elements; the illustrations' impact comes instead from a welter of textural effects (ranging from rough paper grain to the hatchwork of clear brushstrokes), with the saturated colors in brown floor, green playing field, and other components anchoring the compositions; the personified animals are comic without becoming toylike, their expressive eyes peering out at the viewer. While there's better animal poetry (and Kees Moerbeek's *New at the Zoo*, BCCB 11/89, offers a more piquant paper-engineering approach to zoology), the open-the-flap appeal and unusual visual style will draw poetry-shy youngsters. DS

SKURZYNSKI, GLORIA  

Tommy's life has been connected with unions as far back as he can remember, beginning with the murder of his labor-organizer uncle when Tommy was only ten. He inherited his uncle's guitar and grew to be a proficient guitar player and singer; however, he himself narrowly dodged a literal bullet after his first real gig, when a brawl broke out over support of a miners' strike. Since musicians don't make money, Tommy must, despite his mother's objections, go down to work in the coal mine where his own father died; there he takes the dangerous step of embarking on a clandestine romance with the mine-owner's daughter. Although the setting (Utah in the early 1900s) is convincingly evoked, the plot suffers from a few too many elements, and commentary between the chapters (written in hindsight from Tommy's perspective at the end of the novel) further jolts the pacing. Some readers may give up before Tommy meets the legendary Joe Hill and receives an invitation to take his place as musician to the people. However, those who stick with the many threads will be rewarded by an unusual account of the
labor movement, and they'll applaud Tommy's final decision to bypass music and focus instead on law, the more directly to advance the cause of justice. The history of labor movements often seems abstract to young people; here's a concrete evocation with an appealing hero that may engage some social consciences. KM


Sisters Trisha and Donni are only ten months apart, but the distance between them grows daily. The older Trisha, a gifted student, excels in eighth grade; Donni, artistically gifted but less mature, was held back, and she now struggles in sixth grade. When their parents divorce, both girls suffer: Trisha lives with her mother, misses Donni, and frets about being the "perfect" child; Donni lives with her father, acts out in school in an effort to get her parents to talk to one another, and separates from Trisha as well as their mother. Donni's acting out reveals her deep-seated emotional and psychological trauma about the divorce, and it is only through the intercession of her practical mother that Donni realizes she's not crazy, but suffering. Meanwhile Trisha, whose acting out is a lot less conspicuous, slips into a passive depression that threatens her well-being. This is more a slice of life than a well-developed novel; the girls do a lot of telling (the sisters take turns narrating their own stories) and not so much showing of their lives, but their voices—especially the more developed Donni's—suffice to carry the slight plot. Springer is particularly good at getting inside the head of the troublemaker who doesn't plan for disaster but somehow always causes one (the opening scene where Donni paints on the girl in front of her is a case in point). Adler's Split Sisters (BCCB 4/86) is a better exploration of the theme, but this is a serviceable drama about two youngsters suffering from anxiety in a world they didn't make. JMD


In the introduction, Stavans states his purpose—to give Latino youth a means to discover themselves through literature—and promises that in ten years he'll compile another anthology, this time of pieces penned by the readers of this book. The collection in this go-round includes poetry by Gary Soto ("Mexicans Begin Jogging"), Luis Palés Matos ("Black Dance"), Ruth Behar ("The Jewish Cemetery in Guanabacoa"), and Achy Obejas ("Sugarcane"), among others; each poem appears in both English and Spanish. Prose selections, all in English, include an essay about body image by Carolina Hospital ("My Cuban Body"), an explanation of quinceañera ceremonies by Rolando Hinojosa-Smith ("Sweet Fifteen"), and an offering about a young boy's first romantic kiss by Willie Perdomo ("Harlem River Kiss"). The varied entries are an exhilarating mix of styles and subjects: folktales masquerade as stories of illegal immigrants, traditional Christmas poems get new life, and corridas (folk songs) take on modern subject matter. This collection has an adult feel to it in that the material is sometimes nostalgic, but overall this is a substantial sampling for browsers and dedicated readers. A glossary and an annotated list of suggested further reading is included. JMD
STEWART, SHARON  City of the Dead.  Red Deer, 2001  231p
Paper ed. ISBN 0-88995-229-9  $7.95  R  Gr. 6-10

Ten stories of the supernatural with the occasional technological twist make up this pleasa-

rably creepy collection.  Stewart’s young protagonists have typical ado-

lescent concerns—popularity, computers, money, love—until confronted with im-

possible, inescapable supernatural anomalies.  The commonplace settings (bed-

rooms, hiking trails, city streets, etc.) make the inexplicable stand out with fright-

ening clarity, as the seemingly innocent and mundane becomes the stuff of night-

mare and miracle: a computer virus imbues electrical appliances with mur-

derous intent (“Trojan Horse”); a phone call from beyond the grave brings a mes-

sage of hope and forgiveness to a grief-stricken little girl (“Call Me”); a young 

fisherman finds himself on the wrong end of obsession (“Hooked”); and a ubiqui-

tous screensaver has hypnotic effects (“Flying Toasters”).  The style is easygoing 

vernacular informed by classical myth, and while there is the occasional instance of 

overexplanation, the stories are consistently intriguing.  Park this one where your 

younger young adults can reach it.  JMD

THOMPSON, KATE  The Beguilers.  Dutton, 2001  183p
ISBN 0-525-46806-4  $16.99  Ad  Gr. 6-9

Rilka has always been the odd one in her family and in her village.  She is allergic 
to the villagers’ beloved chuffies (empathetic doglike creatures that salve psychic 
pain) for one thing, and for another she alone chafes at the constraints put upon 
the villagers by the ruling priests and priestesses.  When she becomes fascinated 
with the beguilers (the strange light-beings that haunt the village nights and drive 
the unwary insane) and decides to leave her protective village to capture one, she is 
cast out without support or recourse.  Only old Hemmy publicly states that she 
will assist Rilka; armed with bits of village lore and history supplied by the old 
woman, the girl sets out on what is believed to be an impossible quest.  Quests for 
elusive mythical creatures are always engaging, and the beguilers are, in fact, pretty 
darn beguiling; Rilka, the stubborn loner, is a sympathetic quester.  The narrative 
unfortunately disintegrates towards the end: the link between beguilers and chuffies 
is strongly implied but not clearly explained, Rilka’s sudden but certain passion for 
the blind mountaineer who assists her is ungrounded, and her return to the village 
(and her subsequent acceptance by her father and the other villagers) has no logical 
foreshadowing of any kind.  Rilka’s journey retains appeal, though, and fans of 
Thompson’s Switchers (BCCB 9/98) may wish to follow along.  JMD

WEBSTER, M. L., ad.  On the Trail Made of Dawn: Native American Creation 
Stories  Linnet, 2001  70p
ISBN 0-208-02497-2  $19.50  R  Gr. 5-9

Webster includes thirteen creation myths from as many American Indian cultures 
in this slim volume, retelling tales from the Tlingit, Aztec, Hopi, and Cherokee, 
among others; following each brief tale is a description of that tribe’s culture and 
practices.  The overall tone of the included background information, which takes 
up nearly as much text as the stories, is reverent and somewhat stiff and the over-
views somewhat touristy.  That being said, the stories themselves are tightly retold, 
with few wasted words, and this economy of language results in an appealing taut-
ness and useful accessibility; this will therefore be useful for reading aloud and curricular employment as well as for individual reading. Each chapter opens with a short poem introducing the story; sources for cultural information, poems, and stories are given at the book’s conclusion. JMD

WEILL, SABRINA SOLIN  *We’re Not Monsters: Teens Speak Out about Teens in Trouble.* HarperTempest, 2001  [160p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029543-0  $15.89
Reviewed from galleys M Gr. 7 up

When Weill says trouble, she means trouble: her book examines teen murder, suicide, infanticide, sexual offenses, and deliberate self-injury. Each chapter is filled with quotes from teens, advice from experts, relevant statistics, and accounts of kids sadder but wiser or beyond saving, plus tips to help yourself or your friends if it looks like trouble is looming on a personal level. There’s some good information here, and the voices of the teens are poignant and articulate. Unfortunately, the author does a poor job of sorting, analyzing, and synthesizing the material: she never deals with the contradictions or gaps in her quotes and statistics or with her own unacknowledged assumptions, she tends to force anecdotes and examples to fit her theories (Soon-Yi Previn and Woody Allen are hardly proof that “girls hooking up with older guys is a trend that’s surprisingly accepted in America”), and her information is sometimes misleadingly phrased to the point of inaccuracy. As a research resource, this is therefore burdened with hefty flaws, but there’s definitely some sensationalistic reading appeal in the tragic stories that may keep young people reading long enough for the bolstering advice. A list of helpful agencies is included, as is a reading list oddly devoid of publication information. DS

WELLS, ROSEMARY  *The House in the Mail;* by Rosemary and Tom Wells; illus. by Dan Andreasen. Viking, 2002  32p

Just as Emily’s expanding family is about to outgrow their ol’ Kentucky home, Pa announces that they are ordering a new house from Sears, Roebuck, a $2500 wonder that will include all the modern conveniences of a trendy 1927 home—indoor plumbing, electrical lighting and refrigeration, gas for cooking. The fictional storyline is little more than an excuse to follow the house’s construction, from the time it arrives in pieces via railroad, through foundation and framing and roofing work, to utility hookups and plastering and even the addition of a hidden treasure cache in the floor of Emily’s closet. Readers will easily appreciate the enormous effort required to get a prefab up and running, but those who follow the stages closely will certainly pose some questions: How is Emily’s family able to muster the funds to become the envy of their neighbors? How do they connect with gas and electrical and water supply lines in this developing area? What on earth is a Hoosier cabinet? Scrapbook-style vignettes exude cozy warmth, but they supply more visual information about Emily’s various enthusiasms than about the house in progress. Still, this is an offbeat view of America in transition from a primarily rural to urban way of life, and the birth of Emily’s newest brother in a Lexington hospital (“the first member of the family ever born away from home”) underscores the irrevocable passing of simpler times. EB
WHYBROW, IAN  Wish, Change, Friend; illus. by Tiphanie Beeke. McElderry, 2002  [26p]
ISBN 0-689-84930-3  $16.00
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  3-6 yrs

Little Pig leads a quiet, solitary life enjoying his favorite pastime ("Not many small pigs like reading, but Little Pig did"), until one day he finds three new words in a book: "wish," "change," and "friend." After obligingly wishing for a change and a friend, Pig gets both—the weather changes to pretty snow, and he builds himself a snowman friend. When the two friends go tramping through the snow, they find a penguin, also struggling with unfamiliar words: "pig" and "together." The three of them (well, mostly the pig and the penguin) contemplate the words and decide that they're all good but "together" is their favorite, so together they stay. Whybrow (author of Sammy and the Dinosaurs, BCCB 9/99) effectively establishes a wondering, thoughtful mood that's not too abstract for his young audience, and the text's tender simplicity makes it suitable for nap times and other quiet moments. The story loses what gentle momentum it has, however, and instead becomes a confused ramble towards the end: why are we suddenly talking in boldface about "book" and "penguin" when those words weren't in anybody's reading, why is opening a shop the culmination of this beginning friendship, and where exactly does the snow friend fit into all of this? Beeke balances soft, translucent tones for her landscape with a sturdily painted little pig, whose naive energy and fuzzy edges suggest torn paper. Her inverted books may baffle young viewers just beginning to get a clue about this reading thing, but the luminous snow-touched landscapes make a suitably cozy fantasy world. There are more tightly written tales of young friendship, but the aura of winter magic here may be enough to enchant some youngsters. DS

WILSON, JACQUELINE  Girls in Love. Delacorte, 2002  181p

The girls of the title are Ellie, the thirteen-year-old narrator, and her two best friends, Magda and Nadine, but the "in love" description is arguable. Nadine is at least thoroughly besotted with an older boy, Liam, despite her friends' concern that he's merely using her, but Magda is merely marking time with passable but slow-on-the-uptake Greg; Ellie yearns so much for a boyfriend that she makes one up, turning the determined twelve-year-old who writes her letters into a dreamboat with whom she had a holiday romance. There are overtones of Rennison's Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging (BCCB 5/99) in Ellie's fervid present-tense narration, but there's a touch more depth as well, since Wilson treats Ellie's desperation with respect and sympathy as well as humor. Serious subjects inform the narrative: though some aren't successfully addressed (there's a juiceless subplot about strains in Ellie's father and stepmother's marriage), others acknowledge the complexity of a contemporary young girl's life (Liam is indeed using Nadine, fasting on her because "if you go with virgins you don't have to bother about safe sex"). The easygoing style, complete with plenty of intact Britishisms, makes reading a breeze, and there's enough characterization, especially of anxious Ellie and worldly-wise Magda, to keep the girls from being merely ciphers. This amiable page-turner has more oomph than most, and readers will likely be gratified to discover that there are two more volumes planned about Ellie and her friends. DS
WINTER, JONAH  Frida; illus. by Ana Juan.  Levine/Scholastic, 2002  [32p]  ISBN 0-590-20320-7  $16.95  Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 3-9

See this month's Big Picture, p. 197.

YEATTS, TABATHA  Forensics: Solving the Crime.

See Friedlander, p. 203, for review.


Nine-year-old Ursula's parents run the stagecoach station and restaurant in Whistle, Montana (or, as her father calls it, "the Back of Beyond"), at the beginning of the twentieth century. A bout with smallpox leaves Ursula with a badly scarred face, and she secludes herself in her bedroom, refusing to see anyone until Ah Sam, her parents' Chinese cook, coaxes her back into the world with intricate cut-paper designs and cooking lessons. When Ah Sam's relatives, members of a traditional Chinese circus, visit, the resulting performance draws the whole town as audience and gets Ursula out of the house and into the public eye (she provides the music with her harmonica). An unexpected blizzard then traps the guests, and it appears they will miss the Chinese New Year celebration—until Ursula comes to the rescue. Yep based his culturally inclusive historical tale on a real incident that occurred in Trembles, Montana. The story is prescriptive and the lesson obvious, but Ursula's energy will resonate with young readers, who will be pleased to see her triumph over adversity. An afterword includes a note on Yep's sources and sheet music for "Sweet and Low," Ah Sam's favorite song, as played by the fictional Ursula. Wang's black-and-white illustrations, scattered throughout, are soft-textured and quietly expressive. JMD


Yolen's poetic paean to the Florida Everglades presents the natural beauty of this endangered ecosystem in some telling images: "Tree islands hump up/ over the grass,/ clump up/ into hummocky hammocks/ covered with vines"; "Overhead/ a great blue heron/ flies,/ while mostly under fresh water/ lies/ a hungry alligator in wait/ its shroudlke eyes/ implacable as fate." The occasional bobble in scansion and punctuation may cause readers aloud to stumble, but overall the text flows well. Unfortunately, the gouache illustrations have the artificiality of a museum diorama. While the landscapes are fairly impressive, the compositions are sometimes oddly balanced, and the indigenous fauna have a disconcerting stuffed quality. A note about the threats to the Everglades is appended. JMD
Professional Connections: Resources for Teachers and Librarians


The stated mission of this reference work is “to include authors, or illustrators, or works published in English, believed by the editors to have made a significant impact on young readers anywhere in the world, or to have in some way influ-
enced the production of children’s books.” Great Britain and the United States are represented by a substantial number of entries; a lesser but still significant number of entries represent Canada, Australia, New Zealand, West and East Af-
rica, Ireland, India, and South Africa. The entries are arranged in alphabetical order and there are four types: author entries, title entries, topic entries (fantasy, ballet stories, storytelling, etc.), and technical terms (lithography, process engraving, etc.). Cross-references abound, and the entries themselves, especially those dealing with genres or literary movements, evince enthusiasm and respect for their subjects. Black-and-white illustrations break up the double columns of text on each page and help give a sense of a particular artistic style, although the absence of color does limit their impact. A useful appendix of selected literary prizes includes international awards not always publicized in the United States. JMD

Also recently received:


Focusing on titles such as Little Women, What Katy Did, Heidi, and Seven Little Australians, Keith examines representations and implications of disability and recovery.


In this updated and expanded edition of her Writing and Publishing Books for Chil-
dren in the 1990s, Litowinsky provides guidance to hopeful authors.
SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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

ADVENTURE: Green; Petersen; Roop
African Americans—fiction: English
African Americans—poetry: Hopkinson
American Indians—folklore: Webster
Animals—fiction: Bledsoe; Pratchett; Seidler
Animals—poetry: Shields
Art and artists: Winter
ARTHURIAN LEGEND: Crossley-Holland; Hill
Bangladesh—fiction: Howard, G.
Baseball: Bildner
BIBLE STORIES: Bible
BIOGRAPHIES: Adler; Bildner; Cohn; Goodall; Hettinga; Jacobsen; Levinson; Meister; Winter; Yeatts
BOARD BOOKS: Henkes
Books and reading—stories: Whybrow
Business—fiction: Howard, G.
Chimpanzees: Goodall
Chinese Americans—fiction: Yep
Christmas: Harrison
Circuses—fiction: Yep
Civil rights—fiction: Martin
Clothing—stories: Norwich
Commerce: Howard, G.
Computers—fiction: Clements
Construction—fiction: Wells
Cousins—fiction: Sheppard
Cousins—stories: Schaefer
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