ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library Large-scale Digitization Project, 2007.
“The bittersweet story of Earl’s week of school suspension, told from inside his mind. Earl is 13, big and physically mature enough to be mistaken for a man, but weighed down with emotional burdens: the hostility between his parents, for example, and his own alienation from children his age. . . . Not a word is wasted, and an accessible narrative style leaves Earl’s story and deep emotions open to readers of varying levels.” —Starred review / Kirkus Reviews

“Lynch creates a hypnotic voice in this striking chronicle of a painful transition from boyhood to manhood.” —Starred review / Publishers Weekly

Ages 10 up. $15.99 Tr (0-06-623938-9); $16.89 Lb (0-06-623939-7)
THE BIG PICTURE

Lizards: Weird and Wonderful by Margery Facklam; illus. by Alan Male

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Reviewed titles include:

• Silent Movie by Avi; illus. by C. B. Mordan

• Stanley, Flat Again! by Jeff Brown; illus. by Scott Nash

• Bow Wow Meow Meow: It's Rhyming Cats and Dogs written and illus. by Douglas Florian

• Annie Rose Is My Little Sister written and illus. by Shirley Hughes

• Alchemy by Margaret Mahy

CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS 2003

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX
Lizards: Weird and Wonderful
by Margery Facklam; illus. by Alan Male

What do you know? Lizards really are weird and wonderful, as Facklam makes clear in this delightful, accessible, and scaly nonfiction entry that introduces readers to a reptilian baker’s dozen. There are lizards here to coo over (the gecko really is pretty cute), lizards here to gross out your little sister (the full frontal portrait of a Gila monster consuming a kangaroo rat may even get a reading kid banned from the dinner table if judiciously revealed), and lizards to marvel at (the birdlike basilisks can actually run across the top of the water), plus general lizard information that will give youngsters a bit more context for that next zoo visit or woodshed run-in.

The recent growth of nonfiction for young people has been a boon, since there have been more and more excellent titles exploring the world’s factual wonders; sometimes, though, such titles have succumbed to increasing employment of bells and whistles rather than relying on faith in the interest value of the subject itself. This book doesn’t make that mistake; in fact, it’s a rather unassuming volume in layout, focusing not on its production values but on, thank heavens, lizards, making it better conceived than some fancier titles. There’s also a well-chosen lizard cast, which includes big famous lizards such as the Komodo dragon, smaller famous lizards such as the chameleon, undeservedly obscure lizards such as the glass snake (which might be better known were it not pretending to belong to another biological suborder), and others who could each make absorbing single-title subjects in their own right. Facklam, however, never turns this into a hasty encyclopedic compendium: this is more like attending a lizard party with a fond hostess who offers enticing gossip by way of introducing her guests and their connections. Her witty overviews are rich with just the kind of information kids want to know (the popularity of our gentle cover lizard, the chuckwalla, as a main dish because of its flowery diet, or the study of the mysterious sticking power of gecko toes), even down to the final chart explaining “how to tell the difference—or try to” between snakes, lizards, and salamanders. The occasional anecdote adds further spice and suggests a warm appreciation for the subject and writings thereon (the author has a good eye for piquant quotes), and details and implications about biology, ecology, geography, and a few other subjects add depth to the entries.

Male’s art offers lizards worthy of the text. His occasional backgrounded human figures are stiff and almost deliberately inferior, as if trying not to upstage the magnificent reptiles, which are the really important characters in these spreads. His lizards often evince an astonishing photorealism: there’s an almost three-dimensional articulation to the scales of the basilisk, the moth-eaten shedding skin of the marine iguana, and the glossy beading on the Gila monster. These are no taxidermized images, however—he displays a wildlife photographer’s instinct for...
strong compositions, with lizards spilling across the pages, sometimes directing the visual flow with their lanky bodies. The illustrations also evince a pleasing taste for drama; aside from the show-stopping Gila monster, there are several other lizards involved in the delicate act of acquiring dinner, including a chameleon with his tongue tidily unfurled to retrieve a grasshopper.

This is the kind of title that's blessedly useful in a multitude of directions. The action and unpatronizing humor will appeal to a broad range of readers, from precocious youngsters to reluctant middle-schoolers; the lively text and dramatic images would make it an effective change-of-pace readaloud (especially if there's a class lizard present or arriving); its plethora of information allows it to slip neatly into various curricular units. Even kids cold-blooded about reptiles will find something to interest them here. (Imprint information appears on p. 312.)

Deborah Stevenson, Editor

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE


There's a war on, Daddy's been called into the service, and Mama must get a job to keep the family going. Her strongest skill is fielding a ball, and after enlisting her young daughter (the narrator) at practice, Mama's off to tryouts for the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League. She makes the team, and all through the season Grandma, Grandpa, and daughter cheer at the home games and wait out the road trips. One day Mama dons her uniform and heads off to the train station with her little girl in tow for a surprise: "Are you taking me to a faraway game?" Mama didn't answer. She just smiled. No, they are there to meet Dad, home from the war: "Mama touched his cheek and said, 'You look so handsome in your uniform.' Dad smiled and said, 'And you look so pretty in yours.'" Adler offers an engaging premise, but there's more family sentiment here than contextual details concerning the women's league and the war that effectively spawned and nurtured it. Although O'Leary supplies some inviting depictions of leggy Mama stretching for a catch and loping athletically through the depot to greet her husband, a few too many spreads focusing on somber neighborhood streets and quiet family gatherings will probably leave viewers clamoring for less posing and more action. An author's note briefly comments on the League, but listeners must puzzle out references to The Jack Benny Show and Grandpa's old war medals on their own. EB


Adler climbs aboard the L & C bicentennial bandwagon with this primary-grades offering that's part biography and part expedition history, neither fully successful.
Organization is problematic, opening with the 1804 Corps of Discovery, backtracking through truncated life stories of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, weaving in some background about the Louisiana Purchase and Jefferson’s early plans for an exploration party, and then rejoining the Corps in Clarksville, Indiana, 1803. The Corps’ discoveries and exploits are reduced to little more than an outline, with natural sights passing in a blur and human encounters generally depicted as undifferentiated events (“They met many American Indian tribes and their chiefs. Lewis and Clark spoke with them, and distributed gifts and peace tokens”). Himler softens the Easterners’ view of the panorama with hazy watercolor scenes, blunting the Western ranges, smoothing the riverbanks, shrinking the buffalo. Still, there’s sufficient data in text, notes, and timeline to clue kids in on the anniversary hoopla and possibly whet their appetites for other picture books treatments, such as Rosalyn Schanzer’s How We Crossed the West (BCCB 11/97).

EB


Starting with the title question, the text segues into a biblio-alphabet, featuring “an atlas at the airport,” “a biography in bed,” “comic books around the campfire,” and on until the “zodiac at the zoo.” This is not a book for teaching the alphabet so much as a book that uses the alphabet as an organizing principle; it’s therefore rather strained, though it may be useful as an introduction to different kinds of literature. Cozy everyday interiors and exteriors feature boxed upper and lower case Crayola-colored letters in the upper left corners of each page, with a letter-related object featured near the letter itself (a rainbow for the letter R, a ladybug for the letter L, a bumblebee for the letter B, etc.); thought balloons above the heads of the reading characters give clues to the content of their reading matter. That’s a lot to ask of a spread, and the compositions sometimes go beyond the cheerfully bustling to the visually overcrowded, but lapsitters will enjoy playing seek-and-find with the details in the busy illustrations. The invitation on the final page to “think of places” where the reader might read other forms of literature may provide adults with another pedagogical but playful platform. JMD


The often-experimental Avi takes another new direction here, attempting to bring the silent-movie format to the printed page. He’s certainly got a plot to tug at early cinematic heartstrings: young Gustave leaves Sweden with his mother to join his father in America, the land of opportunity, but the family fails to reconnect in New York. Struggling to stay alive, Gustave is enraged when a thief steals the few coins he’s managed to beg. Fortunately, a friend from the old country gives the mother a job and both of them a place to sleep; even more fortunately, Gustave’s apprehension of the dastardly thief catches the eye of Bartholomew Bunting, movie producer, and gets him a profitable role in the movies; more fortunately still, Gustave’s father sees his son onscreen and finally manages to reunite with his family. The story is cornball but appropriately and consciously so; while the textual captions are sometimes somewhat disjointed, the action moves along briskly.
Though the visuals are considerably more static than even those of the jerkiest one-reeler, Mordan has made the most of his black-and-white engravings, drawing strongly on popular convention in his figures' poses and appearance (the flashing-eyed villain sports beetle brows and a humongous and terrifying mustache). His deft hatching and crosshatching effectively convey the grainy textures of early film; shiny black backgrounds suggest the dark of film material as well as film medium, while the white text and slender white borders dramatically pierce the darkness. Since this is designed entirely in reference to the genre of early film, it will probably have its greatest effect when used in concert with exploration of such movies (or other visual narratives) so that young audiences get a chance to appreciate its full range; they may even contemplate creating silent movies, in books or on video, of their own. DS

BANKS, KATE  
*Mama's Coming Home*; illus. by Tomek Bogacki. Foster/Farrar, 2003  [26p]  
ISBN 0-374-34747-6  $16.00  
Reviewed from galleys  

In this lively rhythmic story, a busy mother makes her way home from her urban workplace at end of day while a busy father prepares dinner and tries to exert a modicum of control on the domestic chaos of a baby, two boys, a dog, and a cat. The pace is quick and, in a homey way, suspenseful as text and art cut between Mama's commute and homefront anticipation, repeating the "Mama's coming home" refrain at least once on every spread, until finally there's the joyous homecoming ("Kisses flying. No more crying./ Mama's at the door...// Mama's home!"). While the rhythm varies considerably (occasional rhymes, both end and internal, add further piquancy), the effect is that of intentional and galloping informality. The details about home, familiar and accessible to young audiences, balance deftly with the mundane components of the workday, which are often an unpicturable mystery to kids. Bogacki uses the same nubbly, crayon-like paintstrokes and child-like draftsmanship he employed in Jenkins' *Five Creatures* (BCCB 2/01); home and away visions contrast slightly in their paired and softly rounded scenes, with slashing rains and slate grays dominating Mama's travels while home is awash in sunny and cheerful colors. It's nice to see a caretaking dad, and the waiting-for-parent theme and details will resonate with any youngster whose family is only complete after somebody's workday ends. DS

BATT, TANYA ROBYN, ad.  
ISBN 1-84148-998-0  $16.99  

A poor woodcutter saves a faerie from an attacking hawk, and as a reward he is given one wish. His good fortune turns problematic, however, when his wife, his mother, and his father all suggest different ways to use the wish: his childless wife wants a baby, his blind mother wants her sight, and his poor father wants riches ("Suddenly, that one wonderful wish seemed to him to be nothing but a heavy burden. How could he know what was the right thing to wish for?"). A flash of inspiration provides the answer that makes everyone's wish come true, and all ends happily. The clean, unflowery language supports the swift yet unhurried pace of the tale, making it an easy choice for reading or telling aloud. Ceccoli's airy acrylic and oil pastel illustrations suit the out-of-time ("Once upon a time, and it wasn't..."
my time and it wasn’t your time . . . ”) setting of the tale. The cool greens of the forest and blues of the night sky are warmed by a sunset glow that suffuses most of the pages. Stylistically, Ceccoli is a combination of Dorothée Duntze and Giselle Potter: elongated figures and domestic objects often float untethered in compositions that reflect both the concrete actions and the ephemeral thoughts of the characters. A note identifies the storyteller from whom Batt heard “the original seed of this tale” and states that “it can be found in many forms across many cultures,” but no specific written source is given. JMD

BENDUHN, TEA. *Gravel Queen.* Simon, 2003 [160p]
ISBN 0-689-84994-X $15.95
Reviewed from galleys

It’s the summer before senior year, and Aurin is expecting the usual, hanging out with her best friends, Kenney (a glamour girl with social ambitions) and Fred (openly gay), and trying to avoid her warring parents. It’s no surprise that Fred is mooning over handsome Grant Grayson, and it’s no surprise that Kenney thinks that hanging out with Grant’s cool cousin Neila (“so ethnic-chic,” says Kenney about African-American Neila) might boost the trio’s trendy quotient. There’s considerable surprise, however, for Aurin in her own strong and reciprocated attraction to Neila, in the development of their relationship, and in the effect that relationship has on the ever-demanding Kenney. Benduhn parts from reality in her blissfully romantic picture of confident, enticing Neila and her certain affection for Aurin, and the device of Aurin’s recounting scenes in film-director terms often seems just an excuse for lush description, but there’s sincere sweetness in the story of awakening interest and self-knowledge. The contrapuntal story of Aurin’s changing relationship with Kenney is satisfyingly complex: it’s a credible depiction of a friendship wherein the power dynamics are changing, it’s refreshing to see an examination of the jealousy even a platonic friend may feel when she’s de-throned as main girlfriend, and Kenney, with her needy bossiness, is a rather intriguing character. This isn’t quite up to the standard of Ryan’s *Empress of the World* (BCCB 9/01), but it should still suit readers looking for a romantic coming-out story with some intriguing trappings. DS


The poems in this collection reflect a diverse range of experience under the rubric of family. Included are poems that show the various sentiments of family life: humor, affection, sorrow, sibling rivalry, and intergenerational love. The collection is decidedly multicultural, featuring work from such notable contemporary children’s poets as Arnold Adoff, Grace Nichols, Michael Rosen, and Eve Merriam, among others, as well as classics from Christina Rossetti and Carl Sandburg. There are some purposive and weak entries, and the sophistication level varies somewhat, but there are also a multitude of fresh and lively poems. Watercolors underscore the multicultural (and, indeed, global) viewpoint; though figures are occasionally more awkward than naïve, there’s an accessible specificity to many of the scenes and a decorative balance that presents the poems to good advantage. Those looking to broaden the family beyond Javaka Steptoe’s *In Daddy’s Arms I Am Tall* (BCCB 2/98) will find this a useful poetic compilation. KC
While dangling his feet off a low-floating cloud, God drops a boot. How annoying, since “he's had the boots for ages and has grown very fond of them.” There's nothing to do but go down and get it—a quick trip to Earth and sprint back home to heaven. Human beings, however, are less than cooperative when faced with a semi-shod old man spouting a cock-and-bull story concerning divine identity and errant footwear. God is sass'd, patronized, and generally put off; after an encounter with the cops (“Tomorrow we'll take you to a nice place where you can meet Napoleon and Caesar and lot of other people who think they're God too”), he's even left cooling his, hmm, heel in the slammer. Finally it's a little boy who hands over the missing boot: “I saw a boot falling from the sky. Nobody but God could lose a boot like that.” Bluitgen's tongue-in-cheek narration is ably accompanied by Carrer's inventive mixed media scenes, in which broad swabs of paint, clipped newsprint, photo snippets, and cartoon-like drawing turn Earth into a setting more surreal than heaven itself. After God's rollicking adventures down below, Bluitgen's moral on childlike faith lands with overly tidy finality. Nonetheless, adults looking for a parable with some punch will want to add this to the Sunday school canon. EB

Minnie overhears a conversation, and to her little-girl ears it sounds as if her best friend, Charles, is having a party. Anticipation of a forthcoming invitation changes to anxiety and then to sadness as the expected invitation never arrives. On the day of the party, a morose Minnie bicycles past Charles' home, only to see the house festooned with balloons of many colors. Convinced Charles has abandoned her, Minnie goes to the dirt field to play kickball with her other friends. She runs into Charles, and the mystery is revealed: it isn't Charles' party, it's his sister's. Although Bluthenthal dedicates this story “to anyone, or the friend of anyone, who's ever felt left out,” she pulls her punch in the end, since Minnie isn't really left out, she's just mistaken. Minnie's progressive unhappiness is so successfully limned, however, that the story is still poignant, despite the happy ending. Watercolor illustrations are clean-lined and simple, and changing layouts from page to page (vignettes and full- and half-page paintings) add variety for the viewing eye. Bluthenthal has Minnie's point of view down pat, and her falling spirits as the week goes by with no sign of an invitation and no word from Charles are palpable. Adults may find this particularly useful for creating empathy in the primary-grade social set. JMD

Haunting paintings in watercolor and oil are the heartbeat of a book that presents, in accompaniment, song-poems from Plains Indian tribes who survived and thrived on buffalo meat, hides, sinews, bones, and the spiritual connection between hu-
man and animal lives. Brodsky's deeply textured, monolithic compositions reach for that spiritual connection, barely suggesting, in some cases, the literal details but always respecting the anatomical proportions of these powerful beasts through the play of their shapes against earthen-toned or blood-red backgrounds. Contrasting lyrics in turquoise are effectively offset with explanations in smaller black typeface, which describe both specific rituals and more general cultural context of the buffalo's significance among the Pawnee, Mandan, Osage, Sioux, Dakota, and Hidatsa. Stark chants recount the buffaloes' cycle, from herds at their peak ("I rise, I rise, I, whose tread makes the earth rumble") to an old bull's sad decline ("our father the buffalo heavy with age, endlessly walking, too heavy to rise again if he should fall"). Source notes primarily cite _I, the Song, Classical Poetry of Native North America_ and bulletins or annual reports of the Bureau of Ethnology. Unfortunately, the notes refer to incorrect page numbers for all the poems, but diligent readers can match the first phrase of each poem, which is cited in the notes, back to the right text. Despite the varied media and styles that Brodsky employs, the total effect of the book is cohesively intense, and the cover—two staring eyes and two dark rectangles for nose and mouth, all set against mottled browns bled off the page—is riveting. Pair this with Russell Freedman's _Buffalo Hunt_ (BCCB 10/88) for a combination of aesthetic and factual understanding. BH

**BROWN, JEFF** _Stanley, Flat Again!_; illus. by Scott Nash. HarperCollins, 2003 87p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029826-X $15.89

The one character who's better when he's two-dimensional returns in this happily goofy new title. Stanley Lambchop's flatness cure (he'd been inflated with a bicycle pump) unfortunately loses its efficacy when he's accidentally struck on his Osteal Balance Point (according to his doctor, now the world's leading expert on flatness), so he's flat again. While flatness has its advantages (Stanley makes a dandy spinnaker on a family friend's yacht), Stanley's a little daunted by the various adventures he's encountered over the last few books ("Why am I always getting flat, or invisible or something?"). Fortunately, his minor reservations are easily overcome, and he's ready and willing to save his unpleasant classmate when a building partially collapses around her, leaving only enough space for a flat person to reach her. Brown has perfect pitch with this eternally loopy story, treating the strange happenings with a deadpan Thuerbesque humor that makes even Stanley's angsting (and a very nonproductive visit with the school counselor) warmly comedic. It's the parodic normality of the situation that renders the proceedings entertainingly ridiculous, as when the doctor penetratingly inquires, "Is there, perhaps, a family history of flatness?" or the fire chief points out the limited damage Stanley could sustain in a total building collapse: "We've got to remember the boy is already flat." Nash's illustrations give the Lambchops a comically Weeble-like roundness, and even Stanley has a perky, if pressed, presence. DS

**CHEN, DA** _Wandering Warrior_. Delacorte, 2003 322p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-73020-9 $15.95 M Gr. 5-8

The distinctive moles on Luka's feet mark him as the future emperor of China, destined to wrest control of the kingdom from the Mogos under their evil leader,
Ghengi. The boy is lovingly protected, nurtured, and tutored by the monk Atami until the pair are separated by their enemies. After dodging a death sentence with the assistance of kung fu grandmaster Gulan (who is also Atami’s old colleague), Luka makes his way to a monastery where he’s party to entirely too many fortuitous reunions, he spars with jealous boy monks, he rides mythical beasts, and he generally passes the time in martial-arts escapades until the inevitable showdown with Ghengi (who—shades of Luke Skywalker—is Luka’s father). Chen gets off to a good start with the time-honored but viable tale of a pauper prince awaiting his true destiny; unfortunately, he hangs this plotline in the back of the closet and garbs the story with cardboard characterizations, a glitzy parade of fantastical fauna, and dialogue worthy of a dubbed Asian B movie: “Way to go, Luka man. You are very, very holy there”; “You still stink. ‘Now you do too.’ ‘This whole place stinks’ . . . ‘Stop being such a clean monk. Stinking is mighty good for you.’” Readers in search of a gripping martial arts tale will want to look a bit further East, to Haugaard’s The Boy and the Samurai (BCCB 4/91) and other such adventures or Kimmel’s Sword of the Samurai (4/99). EB


Nancy’s Grandma Ni Ni receives a letter from her brother in China explaining that the city is tearing down their father’s old house to make way for a new apartment building. Ni Ni shows Nancy and her brother photographs, sharing her fond memories of her old garden: “Ba Ba had a fishpond in the middle.... All day I follow him, help him pinch the buds and feed the fish.” It is clear to Nancy that Ni Ni mourns the loss of her father’s house and garden, and later that day at the schoolyard fair she wins a cheer-up present for her grandmother—two goldfish. Nancy decides to dig a goldfish pond under the backyard honeysuckle bush, and, with the help of her brother and their neighbor, Mrs. Zalinsky, she does just that. A delighted Ni Ni christens the pond “Ba Ba’s Garden in America,” and they take pictures to send to China. The story is warmhearted, and there’s some originality in focusing on the adult, rather than the child, who’s sad at what’s left behind. Unfortunately, the story is overly explanatory and text-heavy. The oil paintings are stiff and literal, with pedestrian compositions, and their yellowed finish makes the palette dingy. Still, the obvious affection among the various family members makes Nancy’s efforts both touching and credible, and the not-so-far-fetched conclusion is quietly but solidly satisfying. JMD


There are two stories of Sahara’s life: one, the file the school keeps on her, containing her yearning letters to her absent father and information about her educational Special Needs; two, the narrative she herself writes and secretes in a special spot in her beloved library. The arrival of an enthusiastic and iconoclastic new fifth-grade teacher, Miss Pointy, heralds an educational change that means growth for everybody in the class, but especially for Sahara, who finally receives the encouragement
to allow her to become publicly the writer she is privately. Though there’s some wishful unreality both in the level of Sahara’s writing skills and in the portrait of the colorful Miss Pointy (who’s rather a cliché of the eccentric and inspired teacher), Codell has a plainspoken yet vivid creativity of expression that gives the story an effervescent enjoyability (“A teacher who had a brother who ate dirt! A teacher who would lend you two dollars!”). The book is knowing about classroom dynamics, making the most of its economical characterizations of Sahara’s classmates, but ultimately it’s Codell’s firm championing of her underdog narrator that provides the satisfaction here (“If they kept files on grown-ups,” says Sahara sagaciously, “it would be a different story, wouldn’t it?”). Readers may yearn for their own Miss Pointy, but one hopes they get the real message even without her: their voices are theirs to find. DS

COOPER, HELEN  
_Sandmare_; illus. by Ted Dewan. Farrar, 2003 72p
ISBN 0-374-36406-0  $15.00  R  Gr. 2-4

The Sandmare begins life as a drawing on the sand, with a pebble for an eye and only two legs, because Polly’s father can’t draw legs very well. Polly, who helped her father draw the sand horse, wishes that it could escape the confines of the beach. Her father warns her that wishes like that don’t often come true, but as it happens, the Sandmare herself had wished to be free at the same time, “so the wish was very strong.” Sandmare must get far away from the beach if she is to survive, and fortunately she’s assisted by the sun, a curious dog, a herd of beach ponies, a pink gorilla, a glass horse in a shop window, a toy horse on wheels, and finally by Polly herself; despite all of her helpful friends, though, there are a fair number of villains who would thwart her progress, and their presence adds suspense and gentle excitement. Pen and ink drawings throughout the text add to the whimsy and aid in comprehension of the more fantastical elements. This early chapter book is undeniably sweet, but there is enough wit, suspense, and even eeriness (the hypnotic merry-go-round horses that tempt the Sandmare to abandon her quest and go back to the sea are just plain spooky) to save it from being cloying or sentimental. Young readers who believe in the power of wishes and who sense wonder in sand, sea, and sky will find much scope for the imagination here. KC

CORBET, ROBERT  
_Fifteen Love_. Walker, 2003 [192p]
ISBN 0-8027-8851-3  $16.95  Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

The rest of the school sees Will Holland as the loner who’s always in his tracksuit, but Mia Foley thinks he’s deep; most of the school sees Mia Foley as the tagalong to her two flashy friends, but Will thinks she’s a glamorous beauty. While it’s obvious to readers that these two should get together, Will and Mia have a lot to negotiate before that can happen: her disintegrating family life (her father’s cheating on her mother), his high-pressure parents (they want him to be a tennis champion), and the social vagaries of teenage life (including a play for Will by Vanessa, Mia’s former best friend). This Australian import has been heavily, if not completely effectively, Americanized, but there’s enough energy in the story to survive all manner of translation. The book manages the difficult feat not just of combining two viewpoints but of successfully combining levels of seriousness, so that funny and rueful fifteen-year-old anxiety about one’s social position blends smoothly with harder issues. There’s a matter-of-fact acknowledgment of the different de-
There’s also heartbreak at parental betrayal (Mia finally gets through to her father by presenting him with her smashed, formerly precious viola, which had previously been his), anxiety about family futures (Will’s younger brother, Dave, was the tennis star in the family until a serious spinal injury changed his life), and exploration of the possibility of forgiveness and improvement in all relationships, not just the romantic ones. Such a wider implication is certainly welcome, and it won’t interfere with the pleasures of those readers who just want to see Will and Mia finally get together. DS

CRUM, SHUTTA  *Spitting Image.* Clarion, 2003 [224p]
ISBN 0-618-23477-2 $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R Gr. 4-8

Jessica Kay Bovey begins her summer full of unanswered questions about who she is and where she fits in the world. When a VISTA volunteer shows up in Baylor, Kentucky to help fight the War on Poverty, Jessie eagerly joins the cause by raising money to help her best friend get new glasses. She realizes, however, that helping people is a complicated process. On the one hand, newspaper pictures of poverty-stricken miners and their families can help stir people into doing the right thing, but on the other hand, what about the pride of the folks—her friends and neighbors who are doing the best they can to care for their families—who are in the pictures? Though she occasionally waxes a bit too philosophical for a twelve-year-old, Jessie has an engaging and believable narrative voice. The characters in this novel are developed most eloquently by their physical touch—a character’s gentleness or brutality shows as he tousles a child’s hair or allows a young girl to rest her cheek on his head, or as he grabs a collar or strikes a blow—suggesting that it is the relationships between people that give the town of Baylor its identity and ultimately its strength. This tight attention to atmospheric detail and human connection is the real strength of the book; the tender touches of the loving characters embrace both Jessie and the reader as the narrative moves through the more difficult terrain of poverty, rape, and racial and domestic violence that seem to be an accepted, if not acceptable, part of Jessie’s world. KC

CULLEN, CATHERINE ANN  *Thirsty Baby;* illus. by David McPhail. Little, 2003 [24p]
ISBN 0-316-16357-0 $14.95
Reviewed from galleys  R 2-5 yrs

“T’m thirsty,” said the baby, ‘and I need a drink’ begins the catchy refrain of this tale featuring an insatiably thirsty little tyke, who drinks his bottle and follows up by drinking all the water in the bathtub, the pond, the river, and finally, the ocean. The rhyming couplets of the text and the frequent repetition of the baby’s requests (and of his family’s “good boy” responses) make this book an infectious, irresistible readaloud; the humorous hyperbole of the wee one’s tremendous capacity for liquid containment will have listeners giggling as well as rapt. McPhail’s art echoes various artists from Tenniel to Sendak: sometimes loose, flowing lines bound his watercolors, but other times Victorianesque hatching adds a sharp and paradoxically humorous formality. His baby sometimes has the eerie premature sophistication of a doll, appropriate to a young one of such advanced appetite and capacity; the sunset hues that imbue scenes both external and internal additionally suggest a
"once upon a time" location that just happens to look a great deal like real life.
This is a perennially successful formula: infant greed and excess eventually sated
and effectively contained in tightly controlled rhyme. KC

Daly, Niki  Once upon a Time; written and illus. by Niki Daly. Farrar, 2003 26p
ISBN 0-374-35633-5  $16.00  R  6-9 yrs

Sarie dislikes school, particularly reading; when it's her turn to read aloud she feels
sick and trembly: "Those words! So many of them—running together, row after
row, page after page. They tripped up her tongue. She stuttered and stammered
over them." Except for Emile, who harbors a secret crush on Sarie, all her class-
mates laugh at her fumbling efforts. Fortunately, Sarie has an escape in her Sun-
day visits to old Auntie Anna, her friend across the veldt. One Sunday Sarie comes
up with an old book, the story of Cinderella, belonging to Auntie Anna's long-
grown daughter, and Sarie and Anna read it together Sunday after Sunday. Those
weekly reading sessions pay off when, one day in her class at school, Sarie reads
aloud and "the words poured out as clear as spring water." Daly's watercolors of
the South African landscape provide a frame of reference for Sarie's physical world,
giving a concrete picture of her day-to-day life that is neither quaint nor conde-
scending. The sand-and-blue palette imparts a sunny look to each spread, whether
the setting is inside or out. The treatment of light and sky adds a sense of the
vastness of the terrain, while the distinctive and expressive faces anchor the story in
emotional reality. The story is universal, and the storytelling itself is fluid—Sarie's
life and her dilemma are simply and succinctly presented with immediacy and
humor. Her concluding triumph and her flowering friendship with Emile are
both believable and eminently satisfactory. JMD

Eriksson, Eva  Molly Goes Shopping; tr. by Elisabeth Kallick Dyssegaard; written
and illus. by Eva Eriksson. R&S/Farrar, 2003 [32p]
ISBN 91-29-65819-5  $15.00  Reviewed from galleys  R  4-6 yrs

Even mundane activities such as grocery shopping can be dauntingly adult achieve-
ments to little kids, as the exploits of Molly the piglet demonstrate. When Grandma
sends her to the store for a bag of beans, she's at first proud of her important
mission ("Everyone will be able to tell she's going shopping. Not everyone is
smart enough to go shopping"), but pride goeth before a shopping mishap: un-
settled by the daunting store, Molly ends up with a bag of potatoes rather than a
bag of beans. A bakery trip seems straightforward, but that goes awry on the first
attempt as well (Molly drops her coin purse en route); fortunately, despite uncer-
tainty, Molly finally manages a successful purchase of a pair of cream puffs for tea.
While the ending is a little flat, Eriksson's text has a quiet vibrancy, like a demure
Kevin Henkes, and it's sympathetic yet knowing about Molly's uncertainty and
evasions (she blames her grandmother, the shop clerk, and anybody else she can
for her troubles). The palette of the softly furry colored-pencil illustrations is
sometimes a little bland, but there's great tenderness in the depiction of Molly's
histrionics and her pigletty little ways (standing on the skirting board in order to
reach the bakery counter, or wrestling with the oversized bag of potatoes, which
seems to be fighting back), and the multispecies cast are more recognizably human
than many ostensible humans. This is one of those milestones that adults don’t always fully appreciate, so kids will welcome Eriksson’s affectionate treatment. DS

**Facklam, Margery** *Lizards: Weird and Wonderful;* illus. by Alan Male. Little, 2003 32p ISBN 0-316-17346-0 $15.95 R Gr. 3-7

See this month’s Big Picture, p. 301, for review.


Having versed his way through the animal kingdom class by class, Florian now turns his attention to narrower categories, focusing on the dog and cat families. Dogs go first and win over cats by one poem, but cats get the last word and have a considerably more intimidating cast (six of the ten poems feature wild cats). These are lighter (and sometimes slighter) than the poems in Florian’s other animal compendia, making this more suitable for younger readers and readees, who will enjoy the chirpy wordplay and cheerful jocularity of poems such as “The Bulldog” (“I’d say his face was full of charm/ If he would let go of my arm”). The illustrations, watercolors (with occasional collage) on brown paper, are luminous and witty, offering some stylistic variation (the delicate, stylized leopard, the haunting black-on-black panther, and the spotty Dalmatian in his spotty room have very different flavors) as well as entertaining extension of the verse. Kids will, according to their respective lights, wag their tails and purr for this diverting and accessible pet poetry. DS


While munching on a snack of beans, “a grumpy old bachelor” misses his mouth and drops his last bean into a well. His loud protestations of loss bring forth the imp of the well, who, in search of peace and quiet (“I hate a racket!”) gives the bachelor a magical bowl that will fill with whatever food he desires. The bachelor invites his neighbors to share in his good fortune, but “one jealous old lady” wants the bowl for herself, so she steals it, replacing it with a non-magical lookalike. The irate (and unknowing) bachelor returns to the well, and the imp gives him a bowl that produces gold and silver vessels—a bowl the old woman also steals. Finally, the imp gives the old bachelor a bowl of water in which he sees the old woman and his wish-fulfilling bowls. He goes to her house and demands the return of his stolen goods (“Give me back my pots, you old biddy!”). She refuses (“Who are you calling an old biddy?”), but the bachelor is so struck by the old woman’s forceful personality (“Such a strong voice! Such a nasty temper! Such awful manners . . . What a wonderful woman!”) that he asks her to marry him—and she accepts. Fowles retells this Jewish folktale from Morocco with an irreverent gusto that spills over from the text into the visual images. A kaleidoscope of color greets the eye, from the opening endpapers to the concluding wedding scene, with detailing in both textiles and text borders that recalls a more freewheeling Brian Wildsmith. An easy balance between narrative and dialogue results in a text made for reading aloud and storytelling; try it with some wiseacre kids and let the hilarity begin.
The source note places oral versions of this tale in Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen, as well as in Morocco. JMD

Freymann-Weyr, Garret  *The Kings Are Already Here*. Houghton, 2003 [160p]
ISBN 0-618-26363-2  $15.00
Reviewed from galleys  R  Gr. 7-10

Consecrated to the ballet since she was seven and marked out as a dancer for life since twelve, Phebe is taken aback by her private realization that, without her complicity, her attention is wavering from her art (“If I am now in the process of becoming a regular girl, I promise myself not to go down without a fight”). In Switzerland, Nikolai, a junior chess genius, stays with Phebe’s distant diplomat father while searching for an elusive grand master who will be the key to his ultimate brilliance. When Phebe spends the summer with her father, the two focused teens find their lives overlapping, and as Nikolai begins to find new ways to focus his life on his discipline with Phebe’s sometimes questionable help, she begins to find new ways to focus her life outside of her art. Intensity has always been the hallmark of the work of Freymann-Weyr (author of *My Heartbeat*, BCCB 5/02, and *When I Was Older*, 7/00), and here she turns her laser perceptions to young people with specific reasons for that intensity. It’s key to her style that the two narrators be extremely articulate, perhaps somewhat beyond strict realism, but they’re not adults living teenage existences but young people gifted with particular eloquence about the crossroads in their lives. There’s always fascination in the exploration of people who have decided early to devote themselves to one particular calling; the book manages to demonstrate the peculiar richness of such a choice while also, through Phebe, demonstrating the difficulty but also possibilities of turning one’s attention to wider horizons. A book likely to strike a chord with some advanced younger readers as well as Freymann-Weyr’s regular fans, this is a thoughtful exploration of youthful dedication. DS

Frost, Helen  *Keesha’s House*. Foster/Farrar, 2003  116p
ISBN 0-374-34064-1  $16.00  R  Gr. 6-9

As a battered twelve-year-old, Joe found refuge in this house, so as an adult he opens it to kids like the one he was, who need a place where they can stay indefinitely with no questions asked and no authorities involved. Soon Keesha finds her way there, and the house becomes known as Keesha’s rather than Joe’s as Keesha’s radar picks up the muted pain signals of those around her who need space, time, and a safe place to grow up. Through a series of poems we hear the voices of seven at-risk teens—Stephie, Katie, Dontay, Harris, Jason, Carmen, and Keesha herself. We also hear from their adults, caregivers who have failed them in various ways but whose stories generate, if not sympathy, then at least understanding as they struggle to live with their own inadequacies. The technique of using poetic monologues voiced by various characters has been used before by writers for this age group, but what sets this book apart is Frost’s use of traditional poetic forms—carefully crafted sestinas, and English, Italian, and hybrid sonnets—rather than free or blank verse for her characters. Different forms map to different perspectives: in the first seven sections, the voices of the teens animate the sestinas while the adults speak in sonnets. The final section is a crown of sonnets narrated by the teens, poignantly suggesting that the development of their own adult voices de-
pends on the interconnectedness of their lives as the final line of each poem becomes the first line of the next. Though their situations are rather programmatic—teen pregnancy, sexual and physical abuse, addiction, homophobic parents—the voices are authentic and complex; there is much potential here for sophisticated analysis of both form and content. An explanation of the rules of the poetic forms is included. KC

**GRAY, LULI** *Timespinners.* Houghton, 2003 [160p]
ISBN 0-618-16412-X $15.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-8

Allie and her brother, Fig, are facing their summer plans without enthusiasm. As usual, their archaeologist parents are off on an adventure, leaving them with their aunt in sultry New York City. When their mother has an accident and ends up in a coma, the stress of her condition begins to wear on the family, and Allie and Fig seek refuge in the American Museum of Natural History, where they follow a legendary mural artist through a break in the time-space continuum that has somehow opened up in the lynx exhibit. Soon realizing that they cannot go travel into the future, they eventually end up 35,000 years back in time, in the very cave where their mother was hurt. There they meet an engaging shaman-in-training, who takes it as his mission to return them to their time. The problem is, will he survive the trip? The time-travel plot is always appealing, and Gray capably explores its conventions, with additional urgency conferred by the family drama. Unfortunately, the conclusion falls prey to a common problem of the genre—it's never really explained how Fig and Allie's past actions changed the present as they did (for instance, an uncle who died in Vietnam is inexplicably back in the family picture, complete with a wife and kids—did they preempt the entire Vietnam War?). It's also not clear why their journey ends their mother's coma or why the changes should have affected their particular family so positively. However, the children's trip to the Ice Age provides the backdrop for some tantalizing thought experiments about time, love, and the importance of family. KC

ISBN 0-375-82252-6 $9.99 R 4-6 yrs


Two new titles in the continuing saga of best buddies Lisa and Gaspard address their daily duress with humor and wit. In *Gaspard and Lisa's Rainy Day,* the two are on vacation at Lisa's grandmother's house, where "it rained every single day. It was too cold and muddy to play outside, and there was nothing to do indoors!" The grownups suggest a few activities, but the unsupervised duo get into nothing but trouble until finally the sun comes out and everyone goes outside to play. The imminent arrival of *Lisa's Baby Sister* has everyone agog with excitement, except, of course, Lisa, who is resentful and, at least overtly, uninterested. Arrival of said sibling produces a change of heart, however, especially when someone says new baby Lila has Lisa's nose. Gutman has that emphatic little-kid tone down just right in narrator Lisa's storytelling, and the childish responses are absolutely on
target. Hallensleben's naive, heavily brushstroked paintings have a soft, cushiony feel, from the rounded edges on furniture to the stuffed-toy squishiness of the anthropomorphized dogs that are the main characters, giving the impression of a high-comfort space that is safe for young children. Lisa and Gaspard are a winning duet, deserving of a place alongside other book buddies, such as Toot and Puddle.


Jonathan's father's keychain has keys to the house, the car, the garage, the office, and Grandma's house, along with a picture of Jonathan "that is more important than any of them." One day after picking Jonathan up from school, his dad discovers he has lost his keys, so the two retrace his steps: at the post office Jonathan gets stamps on his hands; at the barber shop he gets a haircut; at the pizza parlor, pizza, until they finally get home. Luckily his mother is there to let them in, and not only that, she has the missing keys, lost in the schoolyard and returned by a teacher who recognized Jonathan's picture: "... and what is the picture for?" asked Jonathan. Dad laughed. 'The picture? That's the key to my heart.'" Harel's text has an easy flow which makes this a good choice for reading aloud or even for those beginning readers looking for a bit more of an independent challenge. A quick glance at Abulafia's cheerful watercolor cartoons may not register the amount of subtle activity taking place in the street and interior scenes: each face in the group scenes has an individual expression; a couple kisses in a parked car; a painter painting a sign is about to drip paint onto a passerby's unprotected head; a little black kitten plays with a recently shorn braid on the floor of the barber shop, etc. This book was first published in Israel, hence the street signs in Hebrew, but the tale is universally child-centered. Despite an undistinguished cover illustration, this is a cozy book about a boy, his dad, and a small neighborhood adventure, and there's just enough tension in the lost-key saga to add a little suspense to Jonathan's eventful afternoon. JMD


[Note: Books by Bulletin staff are given a descriptive annotation rather than a review and code rating]

Canines from border collies to Newfoundlands are featured along with humans—theirs and not theirs—in these twelve tonally varied stories about dog-human encounters and relationships. DS


Nakri and her sister, Teeda, are studying the art of Cambodian classical dance when their lives are cruelly interrupted by the Khmer Rouge. Forced to leave their
home, their family is broken up—their father disappears, and Nakri, Teeda, and their older brother, Boran, are sent to a labor camp. There Teeda teaches her younger sister the wisdom of the goddess Mekhala, who patiently gathered dew drops one by one until her cup was full; for Nakri, gathering the tiny dew drops of memory and hope enable her to survive hard work and near starvation—which Teeda does not. When the Khmer Rouge is ousted, Boran and Nakri return to their grandmother's house, only to move on again to a refugee camp on the Cambodian-Thai border. Relief workers notice an American address on an envelope Nakri has brought from home, and use it to locate sponsors for her family to come to America. Ho lyrically and compassionately captures the details of Nakri's experiences as she journeys on the "wheel of suffering" from the loving and genteel environment of her home in Phnom Penh, to the deprivation of the camps, to the alienating excess of American culture ("'Extra' was a very American word. Americans seemed to have extras of everything"). Especially poignant is her little brother's reaction to the coffee-table book of brightly colored photographs of a Cambodia before the war that he finds in their sponsors' living room: "Is this Cambodia?" he asks, "do they think this is what it was like, where we came from?" As with previous books in this series (Danticat's Behind the Mountains, BCCB 2/03, Veciana-Suarez' Flight to Freedom, BCCB 2/03), there is an afterword by the author that recounts her "parallel journey" and highlights the history, both personal and political, behind Nakri's story. KC


Fifteen-year-old Green is the green-thumbed elder of two daughters. When her parents and younger sister, Aurora ("as wild as she was beautiful"), go to an unnamed city to sell vegetables from their garden, they are killed in a nonspecific, September 11-type disaster: "People who were close by said they could see people jumping from the buildings, like silver birds, like bright diamonds. The ground shook, people said, but from where I stood all I could see was smoke." In Hoffman's world, the disaster causes an overt breakdown in the social order—orphanned teens roam the countryside, living under bridges, seeking the oblivion of alcohol and drugs. Green reacts to her personal tragedy by changing her name to Ash, cutting tattoos of thorny roses colored with black ink into her own flesh, and retreating into grief-induced semi-blindness. Injured wildlife (swallow, hawk, dog) and a young man burned in the disaster invade her solitude and connect her to the world. Time passes, the garden returns, the animals recover, and so does Ash/Green, and in symbolic manifestation of healing, her tattoos turn from black to green. Hoffman—whose previous young adult titles are Aquamarine (BCCB 2/01) and Indigo (6/02)—here attempts to portray loss, grief, and recovery in a nonspecific way that, while hearkening back to the events of September 11, is not confined to it. The lack of specificity unfortunately makes the story more generic than universal. The prose teeters on the edge of magical realism but never really commits; clichéd language and repetitive images lack the sparkle necessary to make implied magic, or even unusual incidents, credible. Still, there are bound to be adolescents willing to suspend themselves in Hoffman's ultimately hopeful allegory. In the end, Ash/Green embraces her former self and her former name, racing to write the story of her loss and her recovery, spurred by the words of her neighbor: "You are the ink, she said. Write as you want." JMD
HOLWITZ, PETER  *The Big Blue Spot*; written and illus. by Peter Holwitz. Philomel, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-399-23786-0  $13.99  R  3-6 yrs

The blue spot of the title has a fairly limited life, as the text acknowledges, since “it spends each day/ just being blue.” Nonetheless, it’s contented (“It has what it needs,/ and that’s not a lot”) until it begins to feel something lacking in its mundane cobalt existence. Cunningly involving the audience in its plan, it convinces the viewer to tilt the page until, as paint spots do, it starts to run. It turns out the spot’s drippage is actually a search for companionship in the form of another spot; with the reader’s aid, the blue spot runs (literally) into a cheery yellow spot, making a happy bonded pair with a nice green connection. This isn’t entirely original—geometric shapes with a purpose have been around since Abbott’s *Flatland*, and there are echoes of Lionni’s *Little Blue and Little Yellow*—but there’s definite charm to the simply shaped narrative. Holwitz’ text has a casual moseying tone that never overcomplicates its modest story, and kids just figuring out the bookness of books will get a kick out of the notion that the narrative’s progress depends on their own assistance. The artwork is spartan in its ingredients, with tidy white pages displaying nothing but the sharp black text and the titular spot. He’s quite a personable little spot, however, and even his dribbles have an inviting flow and texture; when he finally opens his eyes, there’s a pleasingly Pac-Manesque aspect to his cutout eyes and mouth. Paint-loving kids quick to see the artistic possibilities of the concept will be especially taken with this odd yet gentle little story. DS

HUGHES, SHIRLEY  *Annie Rose Is My Little Sister*; written and illus. by Shirley Hughes. Candlewick, 2003 [32p]
Reviewed from galleys  R  4-8 yrs

Toddler Annie Rose’s big brother narrates this litany of the brother-sister things they do together, from hide-and-seek to reading books to playing store. He also talks about the things Annie Rose does that he doesn’t like (such as playing with his cars); the things she does that he doesn’t do anymore (throw her stuffed toys out of her crib); and the things he can do that she cannot (ride the big waves at the beach). There is enough variety and individual initiative present in the activities depicted that the text avoids being just a list of things to do; the activities are replete with kid-pleasing details that are sure to provoke discussion of what goes on in listeners’ houses (and the various liabilities and assets afforded by listeners’ older and younger siblings). The unnamed older brother is Alfie, hero of earlier books (*Alfie and the Birthday Surprise*, BCCB 3/98, etc.), and the illustrations (gouache and oil pastels) have the same domestic charm evident in previous popular titles about Alfie and Annie Rose. Hughes’ realistic visual characterizations are by now so familiar to fans (both adult and juvenile) that they take on the feeling of photo more than illustration; that is, they seem to be pictures of people we know. The camaraderie and affection between older brother and younger sister, evident throughout, is summed up in the concluding lines: “But when Annie Rose cries, or wakes up from her nap in a bad mood, I’m the only person who can cheer her up. Because she’s my little sister, and I’m her big brother, and we’ll go on being that forever . . . even until we’re grown up.” Collections (and individuals) seeking a title to promote and reinforce sibling affection will find this a happy choice. JMD
**ISADORA, RACHEL** *Not Just Tutus,* written and illus. by Rachel Isadora. Putnam, 2003 40p
ISBN 0-399-23603-1 $13.99 R 4-8 yrs

Ballet dancing involves more than tutus and applause—there’s hard work, sore toes, frightful competition, backstage fights, and stage fright. Even as this book sets out to deromanticize the ballet scene, it manages to preserve the magic and the appeal of the art form: “My back is aching/ My feet are sore/ Do I want to go on?/ Oh yes, I’m sure,” sighs an exhausted-looking little dancer leaning against the barre. Each page features tightly metered verse that tells of a young dancer at work, whether that work be stretching, washing clothes, making up, or fretting. The blend of comic realism and idealistic fantasy aptly captures all of the emotions of the dance studio, where girls and boys, painfully aware of their limitations, nonetheless strive for that grace of form that characterizes the mature dancer. This same mix is carried over into the illustrations. Pen and ink sketches with scattered pastel watercolor washes are set against a buff background, giving the entire book a dreamy, interior atmosphere. The attitudes of the boys and girls tend toward the sweet and idealized, but enough humor erupts in the illustrations to save them from being too adorable. There’s also realism: they are often clumsy and awkward at practice and anxious on stage; sometimes, though, when these little ones take the stage, they are who they want to be—legs high, toes pointed, arms arced just so. Aspiring little dancers will undoubtedly find themselves in this book, with all their most heartfelt frustrations and dearest aspirations affirmed. KC

**JAMES, SIMON** *Little One Step,* written and illus. by Simon James. Candlewick, 2003 [26p]
Reviewed from galleys R 2-5 yrs

Three ducklings hike through the woods toward home. The littlest duckling, however, is having some difficulty: “I want my mama,” whispered the little one. ‘My legs feel all wobbly.” His oldest brother teaches him to play “One Step,” a game to help the wobblies go and to get the ducklings on their way. The littlest duckling catches on so quickly the middle brother says, “We’ll call you Little One Step from now on.” The youngest duckling battles loneliness and fatigue one step at a time: “Little One Step marched through the field… past his brothers… through the undergrowth … into a clearing … ‘Mama! It’s you!’ shouted Little One Step. ‘My baby!’ said Mama.” James (author of *The Birdwatchers,* 6/02, among others) has distilled this ducky little drama into a shining jewel of a book. The feathered siblings are never in any overt danger; they are just far from home and mother, but that will be quite enough for toddler and preschool listeners. The line-and-watercolor illustrations make the most of the contrast between the small ducklings and the towering trees, the broad meadow, and the long road home. The monochromatic palette of mellow yellow is calmly effective, adding to the subconscious sense of safety despite the ducks’ momentary dilemma. The triumph of the tiny duckling is, proportionally speaking, monumental, and young audiences are sure to appreciate his accomplishment. JMD

**KOLAR, BOB** *Racer Dogs,* written and illus. by Bob Kolar. Dutton, 2003 32p
ISBN 0-525-45939-1 $15.99 Ad 4-7 yrs

It looks like the whole kennel’s been let loose, as speed-demon dogs start their
engines for a crosstown race. Competition is riddled with complications, from breakdowns to pileups, and in the end it’s anyone’s guess who actually wins. Racer dogs don’t much care, though; they’re content with a car wash and the prospect of a good night’s sleep. This isn’t going to beat the classic canine competition, Go, Dog, Go: the text putters on a bit too long, and many rhymed verses could use a tune-up and a timing belt: “First gear, second,/ Third gear, fourth./ Dogs just love/ This motor sport”; “What bad luck!/ Please call the tow truck./ Quickly now/ And get them unstuck.” Blue, gray, and earth-toned pictures (reminiscent of J. Otto Seibold’s computer-drawn work) are packed tighter than a junkyard with zipping and zooming cars, imperiled spectators, and toy-like buildings, making it difficult to follow the action visually. Still, Kolar tucks some clever poochie humor into his scenes—the chef flipping dog bones at Pa Pa Scruffy’s food stand, the “Rest Stop” arrow pointing to a fire hydrant, the service station offering oil, shocks, and flea dip, and the Burma Shave-style roadside ads for Better Breath Bone Biscuits—and dogs ‘n’ cars are just the team to get kids revved. EB

LEEDY, LOREEN There’s a Frog in My Throat!: 440 Animal Sayings a Little Bird Told Me; written by Loreen Leedy and Pat Street; illus. by Loreen Leedy. Holiday House, 2003 48p ISBN 0-8234-1774-3 $16.95 R Gr. 2-5

From dog-eared pages to the cat’s pajamas, from going hog wild to smelling a rat, from clammy hands to crow’s feet, this compendium of faunal metaphor is impressive indeed. After the requisite opening definitions of axioms, proverbs, and related linguistic niceties, Leedy and Street launch right into a half-dozen chapters (if one can apply so formal a moniker to their freewheeling spreads), organized by the house, the farm, and the wild, in the air, through the ground, and under the waves. At first glance, the frenetic mixed-media vignettes look like cartoon refugees from a Monty Python episode. There’s some very clever logic in the layout, though, as the “cub reporter” interviews the “wildcat” striker, the “snake oil salesman” “speaks with a forked tongue,” and the “cooked goose” is slathered in the sauce that’s good for both goose and gander. Even pagination gets in on the act: the goose that lays the golden egg also lays a “24k” page number, while a can of “duck soup” on the facing page is “25¢” off. There’s no niggling over derivations (language enthusiasts who want to expound on, say, a nautical genesis for “letting the cat out of the bag” are barking up the wrong tree here)—just comically literal pictures and on-point explanations of how the sayings are used today. An index leads readers to their favorite beasties, but the direct approach isn’t near as much fun as a leisurely browse. EB

LICHENHELD, TOM What Are You So Grumpy About?; written and illus. by Tom Lichtenheld. Little, 2003 34p ISBN 0-316-59236-6 $15.95 R Gr. 2-4

There are many things in the world to be grumpy about, but this book isn’t one of them. A catalogue of daily disappointments, the book zeroes in on those things that are most likely to elicit frowns from young faces, such as having to eat the wrong kind of cereal (“Boring Acres 100% Organic Whole Grain Wheat Bran and Millet Food Substance” versus “Chocolate-Frosted Honey-Glazed, Pre-Sweetened Marshmallow Nodules”), having your gravy touch your peas (“gravy+peas=poison”), being touched by your brother or sister (“enlarged view to show full grossness”).
Even the most recalcitrant little curmudgeon-in-training will find something to laugh about here as he or she explores the delirious details and visual jokes crowded into each illustration. The caricatured figures, rendered in “ink, colored pencil, gouache, watercolor, peas, and gravy” are zanily tragic, and the hand-lettered text provides visual cues as to how the words should be read—large letters beg to be shouted, while cramped smaller words tumble out in a breathless rush. There is even an illustration that helps you decide if you are grumpy—that bottom lip sticking out is a dead giveaway. The endpapers feature “sure cures for grumpiness,” such as “a good belch,” “singing loudly,” and “getting ‘kinged’” in checkers; this book should be added to that list. KC


Not since Autumn Street (BCCB 11/80) has Lowry written a novel that injects childhood experience so deeply with adult tone. In both books, the protagonist remembers crucial aspects of her past; here Katy recollects events from September 1908 through October 1911, from her first meeting with an apparently autistic boy, Jacob Stoltz, whose family her physician father visits on a house call, to Jacob’s arrest for the death of his illegitimate newborn niece, whose mother, Nellie Stoltz, is a servant in the house next door to Katy and the sister of a servant in Katy’s own house, Peggy Stoltz. Class and gender issues underscore a densely constructed story, with Katy’s family upper class and the Stoltzes a poor farming family. Ambitious for a glamorous job, Nellie Stoltz is instead “punished” for her liaison with the wealthy neighbors’ profligate son (who is later killed, we learn, in World War I) by a ruinous pregnancy, while her upright but humble sister Peggy marries an honest man and inherits the farm. Katy, although she marries a childhood friend, breaks out of traditional expectations to become a doctor like her father. The nuance of character dynamics, the implications of adult actions for children caught unawares, and the dawning revelations of institutional injustice all mark this as a novel for sophisticated older readers despite the narrator's beginning her account with her sixth birthday. Details of the doctor's work are precise and evocative, while historical photographs—one of Lowry's mother, others bought in an antique store—permeate the historical fiction with credible realism. BH


A little boy happens on a hatching egg, witnessing the peeping entry of a duckling into the world. After a bit of cheerful bonding, the duckling follows our hero home and settles into the family, joining the protagonist at television watching, starring in Show and Tell, and getting his measure taken in height marks along the wall. Come autumn, the little guy encounters a flock of ducks flying overhead and learns a new word (“Quack!”), whereupon it becomes clear it’s time for him to join the world of waterfowl and say goodbye to his human friend. This is a classic story, but there’s a twist here: it’s told in no more than a dozen different words (and any kid who can manage to read “peep” has covered half the text right there). Luthardt uses his restricted verbal palette wisely, treating the words as punctuation and emphasis for the story (dialogue balloons set off the most important textual
moments). The meticulous shading sometimes lends figures a certain Claymation stiffness, and there’s a strangely sooty tinge to some of the highlights, but the solid clarity of duck and boy makes them an easy focus. Illustrations give plenty of narrative signals on their own, whether it be the seasonally changing landscapes, the growing duck, or the wistful face of the boy sending the duck along his way. The high cue-quotient and streamlined language make this a useful bridge for novice decoders of the printed word.


“Changing! I’m changing!” thinks seventeen-year-old Roland as he grapples with a supernatural force inherited from his father, who denied the same force and deserted his family. Roland has tried to make up for that desertion by becoming a perfect son to his mother, a stalwart in face of two younger brothers’ onslaughts of teasing, and a popular prefect in his New Zealand high school. Now, however, he has been blackmailed by one of his teachers into a relationship with an ostracized classmate, Jess Ferret (a.k.a. Weasel), who in turn involves him in a deepening coil of dangerous magic. As in Mahy’s landmark novel *The Changeover* (BCCB 9/84), there is a vampirish antagonist who adds to his own power by draining that of others, even unto death. Here, though, the villain is reduced to a pitiful human rather than destroyed in a cathartic finale, and the hero’s journey toward full identity (not to mention implied reconciliation with his father) undergoes occasional explanations that the visceral scenes at which Mahy excels render unnecessary. Fortunately, this distracts from neither the mystery nor the ultimate love story that will lure teenage readers. Characteristically of Mahy’s dense style, several motifs thread through the plot to build a sense of suspense and to reveal the narrative spell that words can weave—in this case, watch for “Fabuloso!” and “Roland to the dark tower came,” both of which flash like signals of impending action.


George is a happy kid, who’s particularly fond of hanging around upside down. While he finds inversion a pleasant position for all kinds of activities, sometimes he “is upside down when he shouldn’t be,” leading to adult injunctions to right himself when he’s in the car, at the dinner table, in the classroom. Since George has perfectly logical reasons for wanting to be upside down (he’s being a pilot, a dog, a bat, etc.), he’s resistant to cures and reprimands; it takes unexpected adult action to convince him to lead an upright life. After an original setup, the resolution is disappointingly off-kilter and unsatisfying: there’s no explanation of why the adults’ joining George upside down should dissuade him from his favorite state, so the solution shifts sympathy to the adult viewpoint and suggests that George was driven less by his perfectly sensible reasons than by general contrariness. Mostly, though, kids will respond to the succinct and vigorous text and George’s capable yet matter-of-fact imagination, and to the bouncy illustrations. McCarthy piles on the paint, leaving brushstrokes so thick that some planes of color suggest woodgrain, but there’s nothing woody about the sunsetty tones of purple and orange that dominate most spreads. The cast is almost literally all eyes,
with humongous popping whites and googly pupils humorously dominating their faces; the touches of upsidedownness in various compositions will also tickle young viewers. A truly gifted reader-aloud might manage to share this while upside down, but even right side up this title offers some entertaining insights into youthful perspective.


The McKissacks chip through much of the mythology encrusting textbook summaries of emancipation to explore the plethora of political, military, and legal machinations that culminated in the Thirteenth Amendment. The opening chapter discusses colonial free blacks’ initial faith and quick disillusionment in the promise of the Declaration of Independence. Following chapters examine the advent of Civil War, rife with tangled abolitionist proposals for gradual emancipation, colonization, and compensation for slaveholders, and then the war itself, with pockets of slaves freed by Union military order (orders often rescinded in Washington), the Emancipation Proclamation (ineffective, but of inestimable symbolic value), and finally, Confederate defeat. Prose varies from blunt (“In reality the Emancipation Proclamation could not be enforced. And it left 830,000 people enslaved in the border states”) to florid (“The president’s tall, gaunt figure could be seen pensively pacing the halls of the White House, wearing his grief like an ill-fitting shroud, soaked in the blood of patriots too numerous to count”). Annoying imprecisions riddle the text, from the claim that Lee’s surrender “officially” ended the Civil War, to the citation of Robert Small’s 1862 escape to the Union blockade as introduction to a section on how “the Emancipation Proclamation [1863] transformed the Union army into a liberating force.” Nonetheless, the McKissacks do grippingly convey the anxiety of slaves awaiting official word of their release from bondage, and the jubilation that spread like a shock wave as news of freedom made its way into the deep South and West at the end of the conflict. Period photos, a timeline, bibliography, and index are included. EB


Little mouse Pip covets the purple balloon belonging to his robot friend, Otto, and, apparently unable to verbalize his desire, he points (and points and points) to the balloon until kind Otto hands it over. However, the helium-filled balloon carries lightweight Pip sky-high, until a midair encounter with a bee’s stinger sends him plummeting earthward. Otto’s rescue attempt results in a crash and splashdown for mouse and robot, and while a hippo parent and child are somewhat disturbed by this intrusion on their watering hole, Pip (who obviously has not learned his lesson) only has eyes for the little hippo’s red balloon—and once again readers “see Pip point.” Short, easy-to-sound-out words and sentences and patterned and repeated phrases (“See Pip go up. See Pip go way up. See Pip go up, up, and away”) printed in a clean, large font with no more than four lines of text per page make this a snap for beginning readers; simple but genuine humor (the phrase “Point, point, point” is repeated three times to indicate the extent of Pip’s
longing for the balloon, for example) makes it a pleasure to read. The chunky black outlines of Milgrim’s “digital pen-and-ink” illustrations give them the look of woodblock prints and provide a jaunty solidity to Otto, Pip, and their milieu, and since the illustrations carry the narrative weight of this story (“Point, point, point” is made meaningful by an illustration of Pip pointing frantically to the balloon), even pre-readers are easily able to determine what’s going on. When novice readers request a book that’s both lively and easy to read, adults can point to this title; for added appeal, offer it up with a helium balloon. JMH


The prince of Ireland’s stepmother isn’t pleased that her stepson stands between her own sons and her husband’s throne, so she calls the prince to her and lays a *geis* (“a kind of magic spell, or curse, under which a person must do what he or she is ordered or suffer a severe magical punishment”) on the lad: he must bring her the three magic stallions of the giant Sean O’Donal or die in the trying. Well, the prince turns right around and lays a *geis* on his stepmother, which fast brings her to her senses, but a *geis* once cast cannot be recanted, so they are both stuck, he with retrieving the horses and she with standing “before the high cross by the hermit’s chapel” and eating only what comes from a sheaf of oats and passes through the eye of a needle till he returns. The prince sets out, accompanied by his twin stepbrothers (who bear him no malice despite their mother’s ambition) to retrieve the magical stallions. A chance meeting with the giant’s sisters brings the brothers into the stable, where the stallions give the alarm and rouse the giant, who prepares to roast the three brothers—until the prince offers him a wonder tale that wins both their freedom and the stallions. The musical language of this Irish story dances from incident to incident, leavened with humor and brightened with poetic phrasing. Despite a somewhat washed-out palette, the illustrations have a precise but fluid line that gives an operatic sweep to the pictures; the compositions have a theatrical quality, as if each spread is a stage and all the action is happening in the foreground. An author’s note explains Milligan’s process and his efforts to “bring some of the wild hares into line” from the various versions used as sources for this tale. JMD

MILLS, CLAUDIA *Alex Ryan, Stop That!* Farrar, 2003 152p ISBN 0-374-34655-0 $16.00 R Gr. 4-7

Alex Ryan is the seventh grade’s jokester, always looking for a way to make a situation funnier or livelier, but sometimes the result is not what he’d intended. He’s trying to show pretty Marcia Faitak that he likes her, but too often he blurts out a nasty dig rather than the flirtatious teasing for which he’s aiming. Determined to make Marcia understand, Alex decides to play a prank on her during the class camping trip, a prank that leads to Marcia’s breaking her ankle and Alex’s being acclaimed as a hero for saving her—so long as he keeps quiet about his part in the accident. While the story walks a fairly familiar trail to its destination of lessons learned, Mills adds her characteristic nuanced yet accessibly styled understanding to the conventional plot. The book doesn’t merely dismiss Alex’s joking habit, instead acknowledging its strengths (he’s sensitive enough to use it effectively in order to lighten moments that classmates find difficult) as well as its weak-
nesses. While it’s clear that Alex’s never-back-down father is the source of a lot of Alex’s difficulty (“His dad didn’t need comfort objects, but everyone who lived with him did. There was food for thought there”), there’s also a straightforward statement about Alex’s responsibility for finding his own way. The author is also managing to turn this sequence of titles about the West Creek kids (Lizzie at Last, BCCB 10/00, You’re a Brave Man, Julius Zimmerman, 9/99, etc.) into a smooth and unforced look at group dynamics and relationships as she moves from character to character, resulting in a quiet and valid point: everybody is the star of his or her own story. DS

**Morpurgo, Michael**  
*Kensuke’s Kingdom.* Scholastic, 2003 [176p]  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-7

Michael’s parents have turned layoffs into opportunity by cashing in their severance pay and savings for the *Peggy Sue,* a forty-two-footer that will sail them around the world. Not long after they leave a port of call in Australia, Michael and his dog fall overboard while on watch, and after a long night facing death at sea, he finds himself on an island. This is no deserted island, however—fresh rations mysteriously appear for the eleven-year-old each day. When Michael tries to light a signal fire, his islandmate—who is definitely not keen to be rescued—promptly appears to snuff the flames, screaming at the boy in Japanese and broken English. The pair thereupon establishes a wary truce: Michael will refrain from fire building and keep to his half of the island; his aged would-be companion will supply him and his dog with food. When Michael tests the rules by swimming in an off-limits bay, he receives a near-lethal jelly fish sting, and the recluse, Kensuke, nurses him back from paralysis, softening as his loneliness melts away and forming a firm friendship with the boy. Morpurgo’s spin on the castaway tradition is less a survival tale (Kensuke’s been doing very nicely here since the second World War) than a friendship story, with an unlikely duo bonded into staunch comrades that they question whether rescue is even in their best interest. There’s a sadness and satisfying logic, though, to their ultimate parting, and readers who come to know Kensuke as well as Michael does will recognize the honor in his decision to remain behind: “This is Kensuke’s kingdom. . . . Emperor does not run away.” EB

**Morris, Gerald**  
*The Ballad of Sir Dinadan.* Houghton, 2003 [256p]  
ISBN 0-618-19099-6 $15.00  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-10

Dinadan is a reluctant knight who’d rather compose pithy poems and raucous rhymes than battle over something stupid like a lady’s scarf; he has little desire to gain fame in battle and would much rather attain it as minstrel and storyteller. When his drunken father insists on knighting him, however, Dinadan dutifully sets out for Arthur’s court, his armor hidden under a blanket, his rebec (a stringed instrument) on his knee. He falls in with good-hearted (if not too bright) would-be knight Culloch, and the two arrive in the king’s court. Despite some misgivings, Dinadan finds himself accompanying Sir Kai and Sir Bedivere on a quest to help Culloch become a worthy knight—a task they ultimately discover is not only thankless but downright impossible. In the course of his travels, Dinadan meets lovers from legendary romantic sagas who fail dismally to live up to their own legends and do little to change his mind about romance, women, or the foolish-
ness of some knights. Morris' Arthurian retellings (*Parsifal's Page*, BCCB 4/01, etc.) have run the gamut from lyrical to irreverent, but none have had quite as cynical (but still funny) a slant on knights of old as this one. Morris has a little more going on here with three sets of established and/or possible lovers, and occasionally the action gets a little diffused. Nonetheless, Dinadan is an amusing chap with a slightly jaundiced eye, and while his view of chivalry and the fields of honor may bring the more romantically inclined (not to mention those unfamiliar with Morris' work thus far) up short, those seeking a few guffaws at the expense of foolish lovers and unthinking knights will find them here. JMD

**MÜLLER, BIRTE** *Farley Farts*; written and illus. by Birte Müller. Neugebauer/ North-South, 2003 26p ISBN 0-7358-1847-9 $15.95  R 5-8 yrs

Though otherwise a contented frog, Farley has been embarrassed by recent gaseous excess ("When he was eating, PFFFFOOOTTT! When he was playing, PFFFFOOOTTT!"). After baffling the doctor, annoying his teacher, and displeasing his grandmother, Farley makes a grim decision: he'll just hold it in. He discovers a startling consequence, however, when his gas-filled body gets picked up by a passing breeze and floats away like a balloon. Kids will see the solution a mile away—his family entreats him to give vent, and he does, gently descending as he emits his homey helium. There's a rather unusual amount of hot air in picture books of late, but this isn't just getting air miles from breaking a taboo: there's a genuine structure and momentum to the enjoyably silly story. There's still much mining of the flatulent vein of humor, of course, and sound effects and stinky jokes will send young listeners guffawing (and, no doubt, more). Admittedly, youngsters may draw some socially questionable inferences from the fart-or-float plot (this is apparently a world short of simethicone or, for that matter, bathrooms), so canny readers-aloud may want to be prepared with an explanation of the difference between people and frogs. Streaky paints lend a dappled, fresco-y appearance to the planes of color, which helps keep the Muppet-faced frogs from cartoonish oversimplification. They're still quite funny, though, with their cherubic, lipless smiles and bulbous-tipped fingers, and Müller adds another dimension to the humor with entertaining perspectives for Farley's graceful ascent and sudden descent. This will be a high-flyer for very, very informal readaloud occasions or for jocular uncles looking for sure-fire routes to subversive popularity. DS


Lauretta is tired of her old wheelchair ("Look at this ratty old wheelchair! I've had it since forever") and demands a new one. Luckily, that is just what her mother has in mind, and the two go off "to the wheelchair store to get a nice new wheelchair." Lauretta turns up her nose at the more conservative models ("Too slow") and demands a "nice new 92-speed, black, silver, and red, dirt-bike wheelchair." Her mother complains about the cost, but Lauretta (to the delight of a happy saleswoman) takes the chair home for a free trial. While doing wheelies on the road, Lauretta is ticketed for speeding by the police, and her mother declares, "That wheelchair is too fast. We are going to have to take it back." When Lauretta's
brother sticks his fork through his finger, however, pandemonium reigns ("BLOOD!") and Lauretta saves the day by rushing him to the hospital on (you guessed it) her new wheelchair. Granted, this is a purposive tale with a too-lengthy text, but Munsch does manage to subsume his purpose in a slapstick send-up that will appeal not only to those kids with personal experience with wheelchairs, but also to those who have only had that experience vicariously. Marchenko's slick cartoons have a hyper-hilarity increased by the exaggerated facial expressions of the characters as well as the exaggerated designs of the progressively more advanced wheelchair models. The picture of the customized monster truck-style "X2000 + 2" model wheelchair on the final page is in itself worth the price of admission. Contrived though this may be, it's still one funny (if possibly breakneck) mainstreaming ride. JMD


The citizens of Middleburg are plagued by the provision in wealthy Eleanor Scuttlefoot's will that "Abide with Me" should be the only tune played from the church bells until her husband dies, so he won't forget her. As it is to be played every hour on the hour and with excerpts on the quarter hour, the song is driving everyone in town batty, except for its intended hearer, who is quite deaf. "Bats in the belfry" becomes more than a metaphor for the bell-inspired lunacy in this story: mysterious signs appear up all over Middleburg warning citizens of sightings of the Indiana Aztec bat, whose nest glows with a strange green light and whose bite is fatal should that nest be disturbed. When such a light is spotted coming from the bell tower, amateur sleuth Bernie Magruder and his intrepid companions Weasel and Georgene set out to solve yet another mystery. While Officer Feeney shadows the unfortunate Mr. Scuttlefoot and the Magruder family tries to protect the Bessledorf hotel from invasions of bats and keep business booming, Bernie and his friends uncover the connection between mysterious hotel guest Flute Scoot, the bells, and what turn out to be remote controlled plastic bats that flutter around the bell tower every night. Officer Feeney almost steals their thunder by solving the case himself, but Bernie and his friends hold the key to a number of loose ends, which are all nicely tied up in the conclusion. Readers familiar with Bernie Magruder's previous exploits will know what to expect from this well-paced mystery with its clever cast of eccentric characters; witty dialogue and short snappy chapters make it a good choice for a Halloween readaloud. KC


There's a new kid in sixth grade, heart-meltingly handsome and genuinely nice to boot, and suddenly Agnes Parker is starting to catch a glimpse of interests in life beyond hanging with her best friend, Prejean. The catch is that Agnes' nemesis, loudmoutheed bully Peggy Neidermeyer, is similarly smitten, and although Joe Waldrip sees no problem in being friends with them both, the girls are having none of that. As the rivals wage a romantic tug-of-war for Joe's time and attention (Peggy has no trouble luring him into her sporting activities, while Agnes is his ideal study mate), heretofore-victim Agnes resorts to some questionable behaviors
that cause her to realize she’s capable of some serious breaches of friendship herself. There are no particularly deep insights here, and O’Dell too handily unknots the intertwining love lives by moving Joe back out of town at the story’s end. The toll Agnes’ crush takes on her long-standing friendship with Prejean is sharply observed, though, and readers experiencing their own rifts in sisterly solidarity will wince at Agnes’s dilemma. EB


In this companion to the saga of the Tree Haven bat colony begun with Silverwing (BCCB 2/98) and Sunwing (BCCB 5/00), young Griffin, son of the heroic Shade, makes a deadly mistake that results in serious injury to his friend, Luna. Huddled amongst the roots of Tree Haven when an earthquake hits, Griffin is sucked into a tunnel from the natural world to the underworld, from the world of the living to the world of the dead. The frightened young bat desperately seeks a way back to the surface, encountering deceased bats who don’t believe they’re dead, Pilgrims on their way to a promised paradise, and even Luna. Unbeknownst to Griffin, his father, Shade, has followed him to the underworld in order to rescue him and return him to the land of the living. Meanwhile, Shade’s mortal enemy, Goth, has been given the chance to return to life by the god of the underworld; all Goth has to do is kill Griffin, and Goth will return to life. Unfortunately, the characterizations are limited, and the pace too often falters amid the questions of theology and philosophy. There is nonetheless an underlying tension in Griffin’s obstinate determination to reach his goal that will propel readers through Oppel’s darkly oppressive yet strangely vibrant underworld. Fans of the previous books will be older now and may wish to spend some time in the eerily evoked, unrelenting land of the dead (which, in the final sequence, is revealed to be created by sound and echoes) in order to tackle the huge themes addressed by this ambitious sequel. JMD


Butterflies are an almost irresistible lure, within books or without, and here’s an introduction to some of the flashiest. Patent begins with an overview of the butterfly’s life cycle and then goes on to describe different kinds of exotic-looking butterflies, from the eye-catching morpho to the long-lived longwing, the poisonous postman to the cleverly camouflaged owl butterfly; the book finishes with a discussion of butterfly houses, where one may encounter these beauties outside of their native lands. This last section is the most intriguing (a whole book could be made on the fascinating subject of mail-order butterfly farms, which apparently supply such butterfly houses), but there are some thoughtful tidbits throughout on various butterfly liveries and habits, and Patent’s style is comfortable and engaging. It would be nice, though, to have more hard information about some of the insects mentioned, since the text sometimes omits facts about a particular species’ range or size. The watercolor illustrations are vivid and dramatic, with up-close images of strongly hued butterflies and elaborate caterpillars; unfortunately,
the backgrounds are often equally strongly hued and less deftly drafted, and the compositions don’t always manage to focus effectively on the subject butterflies amid the colorful clamor. Endpapers feature a map populated by many of the featured butterflies, but it’s difficult to judge their range from their map positions; an index, which includes the scientific names of the butterflies mentioned, is appended. DS

**Pierce, Tamora** *Shatterglass.* Scholastic, 2003 [368p]  
ISBN 0-590-39683-8 $16.95  
Reviewed from galleys  

The fourth title in Pierce’s The Circle Opens quartet follows Tris, weather mage and lightning-wielder, in her attempts to train artisan glassmaker Keth Warder. Keth is newly come into his powers, which were released when he was struck by lightning in a freak accident. Their struggle to come to terms with Keth’s unpredictable magic is complicated by a serial killer who is strangling young female yaskedasi, entertainers from the tourist-laden, money-producing pleasure center of town. Keth’s volatile magic suddenly begins producing glass globes full of lightning and fog that disperse to reveal the murders just before they take place, and local law enforcement is very interested. Pierce’s ability to create a believable setting for her fantasy plots is key to her success; not only does she invent worlds in which magic is a credible entity, she develops a varied social structure that supports both the action of her plot and the motivations of her characters. The characters themselves, instead of being the personifications of a set of qualities (as can so often be the case with fantasy characters) are complex and changing. Of the series’ four young mages (originally debuted in the Circle of Magic series), Tris is one of the more conflicted: her temperament is reflected in her powerful, sometimes violent magic, and her moral conflicts are concrete. While the murder-mystery elements here are not as carefully constructed as the fantasy elements, they allow those moral conflicts a stark playing field. Readers who have followed Tris’ story thus far will be happy to pursue it to this end. JMD

**Recorvits, Helen** *My Name Is Yoon;* illus. by Gabi Swiatkowska. Foster/Farrar, 2003 32p  
ISBN 0-374-35114-7 $16.00  

Yoon does not like the way her name appears when it is printed in English, since the separated letters look as lonely as she feels after moving from Korea to America. She therefore gently refuses to practice writing her name, revealing a subtle sense of humor by choosing instead to write “cat,” “bird,” and “cupcake.” With her parents’ encouragement, however, she soon makes a friend, gains her teacher’s love, and begins to feel that “maybe America will be a good home.” Recorvits’ simple text will be accessible, both emotionally and linguistically, to kids struggling with new places and new languages, and there’s a quiet shape to the story that makes it satisfying as well as reassuring. Swiatkowska’s textured gouache paintings keep viewers firmly attuned to Yoon’s changing perceptions of her situation. The artist manipulates perspective from page to page so that the audience senses the distance Yoon feels from other people in her strange new country, the intimacy she feels first with the creations of her own imagination and then with a new friend and her teacher as she begins to find her place in her new home. Yoon discovers that her name, written in Korean or English, “still means Shining Wisdom”; her
story will instill a bit of that wisdom in children who are coming to America, as well as to those who will welcome them as friends. KC

ROBERTS, BETHANY  Rosie to the Rescue; illus. by Kay Chorao. Holt, 2003 32p ISBN 0-8050-6486-9 $15.95 Ad 4-6 yrs

Spending an evening at home in the care of her aunt Lily while her parents have an evening out, small squirrel Rosie begins to indulge in a sequence of anxious fantasies about their fate ("What if something happened? What if... what if... a tiger ate them?"). She's a confident girl, however, and with Aunt Lily as a highly receptive audience, she manages to devise a way to rescue her parents from each of her imagined perils ("I would chase that tiger until he let them free"). This is a gentle address of some of the fears complementary to *Runaway Bunny's* separation anxiety, and the swift and cheerful resolution of Rosie's fantasized dilemmas and Aunt Lily's energetic participation in the game help defuse the real tensions underlying the situation. The sequence goes on too long, however, and there's no real shaping of the story beyond the progression of dangers and the eventual return of Rosie's parents. Chorao's cozy and picturesque illustrations mitigate the unease further, stretching the pictured dangers even farther into fantasy while the squirrel parents evince a certain restrained alarm, which quickly transforms to jubilation at their daughter's triumphs; in fact, there's a bit too much countering of the underlying fears, with the sweetness sometimes turning shallow and cutesy and the textural linework becoming fuzzy as well as fuzzy. There's still some useful and high-spirited reassurance about a primary youthful fear, however, and kids will enjoy planning their own parental rescues. DS


Barnaby the bear and his classmates want to get a classroom pet, but their teacher, Mrs. Sealey (a seal), isn't sure they are sufficiently responsible. The wise Mrs. Sealey gives each student an egg as a faux baby, with the injunction "You'll have to keep it safe, happy, and clean. If you can show me you are responsible, then we can get a real class pet." Barnaby repeatedly says, "This is going to be easy," but of course it isn't, and in a careless moment, he cracks his egg. Nonetheless, Mrs. Sealey appreciates the lessons learned by her students, mending Barnaby's egg with a bandage and rewarding the children with a real rabbit for a class pet. This title is part of a series specifically designed for "character education" that, according to a note directed to parents and educators, "helps children develop skills and values that enhance their awareness of themselves and others in order to solve real problems and to make real decisions." The story is straightforward (thankfully, the awkward rhyme that introduces the tale is easily skipped, and there is no rhyming in the main body of the text) if less entertaining than pointedly didactic. Unfortunately, the washed-out watercolor illustrations are stylistically reminiscent of cheap coloring-book images, and the compositions are cluttered, cutesy, and clichéd. While the story itself does have teachable moments, the relentlessly programmatic nature of the text and the shallowness of the visuals make this prepackaged piece considerably less effective and imaginative than works such as Newman's *Mole and the Baby Bird* (BCCB 11/02). JMD
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-73051-9  $15.95  R  Gr. 7-10

Saldaña, author of The Jumping Tree (BCCB 9/01), offers eleven stories (nine published here for the first time) about growing up—growing up wise, growing up confused, growing up alone, and growing up surrounded by family and friends. The author has a sharp eye for the culture of young adults, those junior-high and high-school students whose lives are frequently lived outside adult intervention or understanding. The characters are Latino, and their stories are shaped by their ethnicity but not constrained by it; the issues they wrestle with are universal. There’s a range of experience among the protagonists, from Rey, who stops to help an undeserving neighbor in “The Good Samaritan,” to Arturo, who is trying to straighten up in “Alternative”; from Andy, who takes his Ruthie just a little too much for granted in “Andy and Ruthie,” to Kiko, who tries to change his future and life in “Un Faite.” Each story depicts an individual character’s moment of truth, where he or she either learns the needed lesson and moves on or crashes and burns. Saldaña’s prose, peppered with Spanish words and phrases (understandable in context), is sharp and colloquial. While much is revealed, just as much is implied, making the stories layered and rich while still rendering them accessible. These are thought-provoking discussion starters from a writer to watch. JMD

SCHWARTZ, DAVID M.  Millions to Measure; illus. by Steven Kellogg. HarperCollins, 2003  34p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-623784-X  $17.89

Schwartz and Kellogg team up for yet another numerical romp (How Much Is a Million?, BCCB 7/85; If You Made a Million, BCCB 7/89), but this time “millions” don’t literally figure in. This is, rather, a slick and pretty darned compelling argument for abandoning English measurement in favor of the metric system. In a breezy fantasy trek led by the returning wizard Marvelosissimo, Schwartz sketches the probable development of measurements based literally on feet (probably royal feet), stones (from rocks to boulders), cups (with a kingly quaff as standard), etc., and then demonstrates where the system strains at the seams. After the nonsensical tangle of competing measures and jargon becomes evident, readers are introduced to the metric system, which looks, by comparison, like simplicity itself. Closing notes expand on current uses of metric measurement in the U.S. and provide a chart with hints for memorizing prefixes and their meanings. For the truly recalcitrant who want it both ways, Schwartz offers a parting argument for a one-system world: “The engineers and operators who worked on a multimillion-dollar spacecraft made a big mistake. Some of them used feet and miles, while others used meters and kilometers. After blastoff the spacecraft was supposed to orbit Mars, but instead it was lost in space forever.” Okay, I’m sold. EB

ISBN 0-8234-1455-8  $16.95
Reviewed from galleys  Ad  Gr. 4-6

Divided into five sections—Mother Earth, The People, War and Peace, Spirit Life, and Enduring Wisdom—this title provides one or two Native American pre-
cepts per page, from sources far-reaching and meticulously cited. Most interesting is the historical juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary selections. The first entry, for instance, is by Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday speaking in 1997, and the one following it by Pontiac, chief of the Ottawa in 1760. Though not all are independently resonant, many selections are powerful indeed: "I am a fox, I am supposed to die./ Whatever is dangerous, let me do it.—1880s, Tokala, Lakota, Kit Fox warrior society song." Some young readers may need adult reminders that these are not representative of one monolithic philosophy, but careful perusal will reveal the diversity and the layers of meaning in these texts. Unfortunately, Saint James' illustrations rob the words of their impact. The cutout shapes have strangely snouted silhouettes, while both the figures and designs are stiffly arranged with machinelike symmetry that clashes with the organic and varying nature of the selections. For contrasting depth of illustration, see Beverly Brodsky's artistic accompaniment for the Native American sayings in *Buffalo*, reviewed above. For some creative language-arts practice, try reading this aloud, with the suggestion that students choose a favorite to illustrate themselves. BH

**STENHOUSE, TED**  *A Dirty Deed*. Kids Can, 2003 [186p]
ISBN 1-55337-360-X $16.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Will and Arthur, an unlikely pair of white and Siksika friends in a 1950s Canadian town that frowns on "mixed" friendship, have already solved a murder (*Across the Steel River*, BCCB 1/02), and now they're bound to ferret out the truth behind a purloined property deed found in a Blackfoot boy's hands, a mad woman hidden away in the woods, and the guilty secret of the town's powerful kingpin, Old Man Howe. Readers of the previous novel are already on to the Grayson bad guys, and since Arthur spends much of this title locked in the Grayson hoosegow, the cultural tensions between the boys, which was so compelling an element in *Steel River*, is sadly lacking. Indeed, it's Will rather than Arthur who bonds (a bit too facilely) with Arthur's grandfather, goes on a vision quest, and is guided and rescued by an avatar hound. These supernatural goings-on never settle quite comfortably with Will's character or the solid (if unimaginative) bait-and-swindle mystery, and Arthur's active presence is sorely missed. Still, there's plenty of shifty residents and unresolved anti-Indian sentiment left in Grayson, and a future episode may set the Will and Arthur team back into balance. EB

**STERN, ELLEN**  *I Saw a Bullfrog*; written and illus. by Ellen Stern. Random House, 2003 [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-82173-2 $15.95
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

While titles such as Prelutsky's *Scranimals* (BCCB 10/02) deal with intriguing combinations that might occur in some fantastical natural history, Stern's poetry treats combinations that really exist—well, at least in their names, such as the catfish, the bullfrog, and the rhinoceros beetle. Each exotic hybrid is explored in four briskly anapestical lines that examine the creature's possibilities ("If a catfish could choose, would she snooze on my bed/ Or swim round and round in a fish-bowl instead?"). The verse is sometimes a little forced, lacking the deftness of that of Jack Prelutsky or Douglas Florian, but there's an entertaining employment of
multisyllabic terms and a sense of rollicking play that echoes the playful concept. The illustrations are sometimes somewhat flat and literal, in their fine colored-pencil detailing, and the portmanteau critters run to a predictable visual formula; they are, however, capable of a pokerfaced Tennielian absurdity that will tickle young audiences. It’s useful to have a poetic bestiary aimed at a younger audience, and it’s rife with curricular opportunities, from language arts to art and a few other stops in between. A final spread offers brief descriptions and illustrations of the actual animals behind the evocative names. DS

SULLIVAN, PAUL  
Maata’s Journal.  Atheneum, 2003  221p  
ISBN 0-689-83463-2  $16.95  
Ad Gr. 7-10

A young Inuit woman attempting to find her place in a rapidly changing world, Maata is assisting a 1924 expedition in subarctic Canada; that assistance has now become a determined effort to keep her remaining colleague alive until spring rescue, since the rest of the expedition is either dead or lost. While she waits, she keeps a journal that describes not just her present situation but also the events that have led her to this place: the forced resettlement of her people by the Canadian government, the separation of her traditional brother from the rest of the family, the death of her parents, and her sojourn in a Quebec City boarding school. The story’s pacing is slow, undercut by the sometimes confusing flashback exposition, and the writing is sometimes a little mannered. On the other hand, there’s a dignity to the style that gives Maata real presence, and the historically based details are sparingly and unsentimentally related, thereby enhancing the sadness. Nor does Sullivan resort to a reductive treatment of his cast, even of the white Canadians and Americans who come on the wave of change that destroys the old life of Maata’s people. This might make an interesting companion to George’s Julie (BCCB 10/94), since Maata too is considering her role and direction in the face of her people’s response to transformations they cannot stop: “I would need to find my own place and time. And at that moment I knew they were waiting for me to discover them.” A bibliography and a note about Canada’s recent granting of the Nunavut Territory to the Inuit are appended. DS

SWALLOW, PAMELA CURTIS  
It Only Looks Easy.  Roaring Brook, 2003  [176p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-7613-2866-1  $22.90  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-7613-1790-2  $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys  
Ad Gr. 5-7

With her seventh-grade year barely under way, Kat (Katia) Randall finds herself suddenly in the midst of turmoil. First, her dog, Cheddar, is seriously injured after being hit by a car driven by Mrs. Lawrence, a woman with Alzheimer’s disease. Then, when she borrows a fellow student’s bike to ditch school and check up on Cheddar, the bike is stolen from outside the veterinary clinic, leaving Kat with a bad reputation around school as a bike thief (especially when a second bike goes missing) and a new financial burden (she has to earn enough money to replace the stolen bike). While Kat monitors Cheddar’s recovery, she also attempts to salvage her rep at school and takes on extra jobs to earn some cold hard cash (ironically, she ends up “babysitting” Mrs. Lawrence once a week so that her husband can get a much-needed break from caring for her). Although the swiftness of the middle-school rumor mill is true to life, the supposed ruin of Kat’s reputation is never really adequately established or supported. The ill Mrs. Lawrence is sympathetic
and thought-provoking, but other supporting characters are stereotypical (the anxious, math-phobic girl whose mom pushes her too hard, the baggy-pants-wearing bully who turns out to be the real bike thief, and the practically perfect older sister who’s always “borrowing” Kat’s clothes). Generic and unconvincing dialogue (“I honestly think that our stubborn, comical old character of a dog will get better,” says Kat’s high-school-aged sister) further undermines the novel’s credibility. Still, readers may identify with Kat’s intense devotion to her dog and her occasionally humorous description thereof: “Home, I could sleep next to her. I could give her love, encouragement, and cheese.” JMH

Talbert, Marc  
*Holding the Reins: A Ride through Cowgirl Life*; illus. with photographs by Barbara Van Cleve.  
HarperCollins, 2003  
104p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029256-3  
$17.89

$16.99

In his introduction, Talbert speaks eloquently of his admiration for cowgirls and his desire that his daughters too will experience some of that self-assurance, “holding the reins with confidence, sitting deep in the saddle, head high, in control, female and proud.” He offers readers a taste of the life that produces that attitude in this introduction to four young teens, all valuable hands on their family ranches in states from Montana down to New Mexico. The book deliberately emulates ranch life in taking its shape from the seasons, examining one girl’s hard labor on a sheep ranch in summer, another’s balancing of ranch work and school work in fall, the third’s matter-of-fact toil in a Wyoming winter, and the last subject’s eventful spring of branding, castrating, and inoculating calves. Though Talbert’s rhapsodic style is sometimes more sentimental than informative, this is a picture that gives credit to the hard labor as well as the romantic atmosphere of life on the range. Readers will find the details—gory and otherwise—absorbing, and they’ll be intrigued by the differences and similarities among the four families. Mostly, though, they’ll just relish the view of a life that’s as fundamentally appealing as it is vastly different from most of theirs. A map of the relevant states locates the girls’ ranches, and Van Cleve’s black-and-white photographs, scattered thickly through the book, provide eloquent portraits of the young cowgirls. DS

Torrey, Michele  
*To the Edge of the World*.  
Knopf, 2003  
[240p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-375-92338-1  
$17.99

$15.95

Reviewed from galleys  
M  Gr. 5-8

Mateo Macías de Avila’s parents have died in the pestilence, and the impoverished, orphaned boy takes to the road in search of better prospects. He’s recruited into the fleet of Captain Magallanes (better known in history as Ferdinand Magellan), where he is almost immediately drawn into shipboard intrigues revolving around ambitious Spaniards’ resentment of their Portuguese commander and his suspect plan for reaching the eastern Spice Islands by sailing westward. Any reader who’s been awake in Social Studies knows that, although the expedition will be successful, at least in the novelty of its route, Magallanes won’t live to bask in the glory. If Torrey’s imagined account is anything to go by, it’s amazing anyone made it back alive, having devoted far more page space to boasting, posturing, and plotting than to seamanship. Torrey fails to take advantage of fictional liberty to posit any explanation for Magallanes’ sudden diversion of interest from exploring new sea routes
to converting islanders to Christianity, or for Mateo's friend Rodrigo's sudden
turnabout from scorning their commander to defending him with his life. Mateo
busies himself among such shopworn plot devices as falling in love (ever so chastely)
with an island girl, playing sidekick to the worldly-wise Rodrigo, and losing his
faithful dog at dockside, only to rediscover him waiting at his return two years
later. Readers in search of genuine adventure might want to jump ship and sign onto the Resolution in Lawlor's Magnificent Voyage (BCCB 2/03). EB


Active little bunnies are dirty little bunnies, and it's time for this one to peel off
duds ("off goes romper suit/ tug tug pull"), select a suitable accent ("Pick a toy/ not
the cat"), and dive into the bath ("Splash splish splish splosh/ time to wash").
Mom's tender ministrations ("Washy nosie washy toesies") and the traditional
bathtime pleasures ("Double bubbles bubble up") make the experience bubbly
and enjoyable. Van Laan's playful rhymes are slight, but they make the most of
onomatopoeic near-nonsense, gleefully splashing words around, and even bath-
resistant toddlers will enjoy chanting along and discovering the final post-bath
mess. Though the softly mottled pastels are attractive, the art tends towards the
cloyingly sweet, and the visuals sometimes fail to pursue the possibilities of the text
(there's no reflection of the "Yikes, the eye" incursion, and the end mess isn't all
that messy). Pons' freckle-faced little orange bunny is still quite endearing, and
he/she is certainly dirty enough to merit a bath by anyone's lights; bunny's evident
enjoyment of most aspects of the dunking adds a pleasing froth (and may make
users yearn for a bathable bunny as a bath companion). Youngsters not quite old
enough to sail the seas with Krosoczka's Bubble Bath Pirates (BCCB 3/03) may
want to get their feet wet with this. DS


Everyday play is the stuff baby dreams are made of in this pair of rhyming picture
books. The child in Driving Daddy is sitting on his father's shoulders, directing
him hither and yon with a yank on his hair or a pull of his ears: "Dad keeps going.
What's he doing?/ That way, Daddy! See the swing?/ Tug those ears and try to
steer him—/ Someone stop this crazy thing!" In Wake Up, Mama! the protagonist
is climbing "Mama Mountain" to wake her up in the morning: "Here's the top of
Mama Mountain!/ Wake up, Mama! No more rest!/ Kiss her, hug her, make her
giggle./ Baby wake-ups are the best!" Each of these volumes takes a cozy delight in
everyday events. Both titles, though, suffer from predictable rhymes and from
rhythms that occasionally stumble into scansion problems. Although the text re-
fers to both boy protagonists as "baby," they are definitely toddlers in action and
depiction, and some big-boy listeners may object to the designation. The pastel
illustrations have a coloring-book simplicity, especially in the dot-eyed smiling
faces and lollipop trees. Traveling piggyback and waking sleeping parents are certainly activities of choice for the toddler set, and while these titles are a bit bland they still have enough bounce to keep lap-sitting youngsters amused—or wanting a piggyback ride. JMD

**Vrombaut, An**  
*Clarabella's Teeth;* written and illus. by An Vrombaut. Clarion, 2003 [26p]  
ISBN 0-618-33379-7 $14.00  
Reviewed from galleys R 2-5 yrs

Poor Clarabella! She has a lovely, extra-long set of crocodile teeth, but there are so many of them that it takes her all day to brush them with her regular-sized brush (“She brushes and brushes her crocodile teeth”). Her friends Zoë (a zebra), Ruby (a rabbit), Liam (a leopard), and Max (a monkey) finish brushing their regular-sized teeth with plenty of time to play, tumble, and eat, but by the time Clarabella is finished they are getting ready for bed. Clarabella’s friends are true blue, however, and they have a surprise for her—a crocodile-sized toothbrush, long enough that Clarabella can finish brushing her teeth in record time, so “tomorrow we can all play together.” This simple story is effectively presented in an easy, repetitive text and lively, distinctive illustrations. Although the text doesn’t didactically address the importance of tooth brushing, it can easily be used by adult caregivers looking to get the message across. Vrombaut’s background in animation comes through in her energetic and richly hued pastel illustrations. Her animal characters are cartooned with colorful details from zebra stripes to leopard spots; Clarabella’s tree house is a swirl of golden fruit and embracing branches sure to inspire longing in young viewers dreaming of their own space. The chronological structure of the story (the plot proceeds from wake-up time to bedtime) and the ever-increasing refrain (“She brushes and brushes and brushes and brushes her crocodile teeth”) will give youngsters an easy hook on which to hang both their attention and their participation. JMD

**Weaver, Will**  
*Claws.* HarperTempest, 2003 [240p]  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

Jed Berg is both shaken and skeptical when a Goth-garbed, pink-haired teenager informs him that his father is having an affair with her mother and demands that he confront his father and put an end to it. The evidence she steadily produces—a series of increasingly graphic photos of the adulterous pair—convinces him, but it’s clear that something about the girl herself is not quite right. With a bit of undercover work and an assist from a computer-hacker classmate, Jed learns that she’s Laura Sanborn, a bright, pony-tailed, athletic junior at another high school. When he and Laura finally meet with her disguise thrown aside, they agree to talk to their errant parents. Instead of ending the affair, however, this causes the two already fragile marriages to crumble, and under the threat of inexorable divorce, Laura’s mentally unstable sister, Jessie, runs away in a canoe, leading melodramatically to Laura’s death. When Weaver sticks to the central theme of teens facing their parents’ infidelities, the plotting glides along. However, the extraneous layers of tragedy, Weaver’s failure to examine the whistle-blowers’ role in the marital debacle, and the teens’ illogical refusal to call for help in finding Jessie reduce the
genuine drama to soap-operatic pathos. Still, there’s definitely some guilty pleasure in watching perfect lives unravel, and readers of a catty bent will sink their own claws right in. EB


With her father and brothers dead, her aunt Morgause seeking her life, and her father’s enemy King Cynric looking to make her his son’s bride, Princess Goewin flees her native Britain. She travels to Aksum, the site of modern-day Ethiopia, in order to recall the ambassador Constantine, her father’s nephew and chosen heir in the event that all of his sons are killed. She is also betrothed to Constantine, but she finds him a distastefully haughty personage, cruelly efficient in his role as vice-roy to the Emperor but personally despicable. When she discovers in Aksum the son of her elder brother, Medraut, who was the ambassador to that kingdom six years prior to her visit, she strikes a dangerous bargain—she will marry Constantine on the condition that she be allowed to name Telemakos, her newly discovered nephew, as heir to the throne of Britain. In this sequel to *The Winter Prince*, the setting of sixth-century Aksum is richly textured, with all of its contradictions of refinement and brutality rendered through apt, culturally specific metaphors. As far as retellings, extensions, and variations of the Arthurian legends go, this one offers a substantial amount of real history from a region and time seldom depicted in children’s literature—a nice reminder that the history of kings and empires happened in places other than just the British Isles. At its center is a strong and thoughtful heroine on whom the mantle of leadership weighs heavily as she tries to balance the moral demands of freedom with the exigencies of command. A historical note unravels the complex interweaving of myth, history, and storytelling in Wein’s compelling Arthurian cycle. KC


Although the theme here is as serious as White’s earlier *Memories of Summer* (BCCB 9/00) and her Newbery Honor book *Belle Prater’s Boy* (BCCB 4/96), the tone is lighter and the plot more straightforward. We are never in doubt that Tad(pole), the orphan at the center of a struggle between his abusive paternal uncle and his soft-hearted maternal aunt, will find his freedom; nor is there any question that his ten-year-old cousin, Carolina, who narrates the story, will find her special talent in the shadow of three sisters who are popular, pretty, and brainy, in that order. This is a fifties Appalachian family story replete with poor but happy clans whose response to music is as traditional as their Fourth of July picnic fare of “fried chicken and baked ham, taters fixed five different ways, and about ten other kinds of vegetables, salads, watermelon and muskmelon, all kinds of bread and real butter, cakes, pies, and cold drinks a’plenty.” The threat to Tad is kept looming and distant, the courtship of Carolina’s mother by an upright new suitor resolves in marriage after she makes sure he pays more attention to his own four boys, and all four of her own girls learn responsibility from Tad, who also helps Carolina develop her gift for playing the guitar and singing harmony. The occasional insertion of a mysterious fantasy life that keeps Tad’s spirits strong gives us a taste of the deeper currents that have characterized White’s other stories. Even without such
depths, however, the chipper writing, big loud cast prone to playful dialogue, and plentiful action keep the story worry-free and easy to read. BH

WILSON, JOHN *And in the Morning.* Kids Can, 2003 198p ISBN 1-55337-400-2 $16.95 R Gr. 6-9

Jim Hays' father has been killed in battle and his mother has died of a broken heart; the sixteen-year-old sees little point in marking time at school and so, with his sweetheart Anne's reluctant consent, he joins other underage recruits from his neighborhood who are off to "do their bit" with the Highland Light Infantry to put the Kaiser in his place. Although boredom, vermin, and witnessed atrocities quickly strip the glamour from Jim's idea of war, even his best friend Iain's insightful criticism of command decisions and their chances in upcoming battles cannot entirely disillusion Jim, who clings to the belief that officers know what they're doing and soldiers serve with honor. Jim marries Anne while home on leave before the "Big Push" at the Somme, and then he returns to take his place on the front line, where readers who picked up on the opening frames concerning a soldier's diary will realize he must meet his end. After patiently leading his protagonist and his readers through a year of military service and battle escalation, Wilson plunges them into the roiling vortex of Jim's demise. The young man has lost all his neighborhood mates, he watches Iain fall beside him at the advance, he sees his commanding officer fall (presumably dead), and he suffers a head injury in the shelling; he's apprehended wandering on the field, tried as a deserter, and promptly executed as an example to would-be slackers and cowards. Wilson never intrudes with an overt condemnation of war; indeed, the format of the novel—diaries, fictionalized news clippings, and other documents—precludes such intrusion. Nonetheless, his message is inescapable: the idealism of youth has been coopted, manipulated, and ultimately squandered. And not just in the first Great War. EB


Twelve-year-old Atalanta is an accomplished hunter and tracker, thanks to mentoring by her loving foster father. Mortally wounded by a ravening beast, he reminds her that he found her when she was four years old at the side of "a great she-bear who was long dead"; then he gives her something he has kept secret since that day: a signet ring she was wearing on a leather thong around her neck. Atalanta buries her father, but her grief is interrupted by the arrival of a brown bear she recognizes as a pre-foster-family playmate. The girl and the bear, Urso, travel into the woods, tracking the beast that killed her father. In the course of her travels, Atalanta meets the god Pan, joins a hunting party led by the hero Orion, and finds herself in the royal court. Once there, she recognizes the symbol of royalty over the throne as the same that is on the signet ring she wears around her neck. Atalanta's quest to kill the beast that killed her father quickly becomes enmeshed with adult concerns and adult machinations, a fact which may distance the book's intended audience. Characterizations are slim, and since it's clear that Atalanta lives to hero on, there is little suspense to the repetitive hunting sequences that make up the bulk of the novel. There is still a certain allure to Atalanta's relationship with Urso, and Atalanta's final escape from the palace (and a future she wishes to delay
as long as possible) has an outlaw quality that would-be escapees will find very appealing. Readers with a yen for mythological meanderings tempered with a plethora of chases and escapes will enjoy following Atalanta’s hunt. Be ready to offer Climo’s *Atalanta’s Race* (BCCB 6/95) or Martin’s *Race of the Golden Apples* (11/91) for followup reading. JMD

**Yolen, Jane**  
ISBN 0-439-24100-6 $15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 3-6 yrs

We previously learned that dinosaurs, despite temptation for misbehavior, are absolute lambs at bedtime (*How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?*, BCCB 6/00), and now Yolen and Teague provide insight into their attitudes when they’re under the weather. There are certainly some dire possibilities touched upon—it would be pretty revolting if the gallimimus dropped “dirty tissues all over the floor” or the brachiosaurus got “sick in a pail,” and nobody wants to drag a reluctant styracosaurus into the doctor’s office. Fortunately, dinosaurs are model patients: the velociraptor “uses a hankie on mouth and nose,” the diplodocus “takes his medicine without a fight,” and the styracosaurus snuggles down under the covers to get some rest and get well. As with the previous title, the verse is simple yet sprightly, touching on some realistic aspects of kid life and leaving the illustrations to make the most of the comically charged situation. Teague makes particularly good use of ceilings in this outing, whether it be pressing his oversized prehistoric critters up against them or raising them sufficiently to dwarf the humans within while making, finally, enough room for your basic tuojiangosaurus. There’s an additional charge from the blandness of the human cast, who are emotively dwarfed by the positively operatic patients (the wailing dilophosaurus rivals Tosca on the ramparts for dramatic intensity). Most of the dinosaurs are identified with a neat little caption somewhere in the illustration, and there’s a complete inventory of the included sickies on the endpapers. Even non-dinophiles will find this adds some cheerful absurdity to the sickroom. DS

**Young, Amy**  
*Belinda the Ballerina*; written and illus. by Amy Young. Viking, 2003 32p  

Belinda the Ballerina loves to dance, “but Belinda had a big problem—two big problems: her left foot and her right foot.” When an expert condemns their hugeness (“Your feet are as big as boats!”), Belinda gives up ballet to become a waitress at Fred’s Fine Food, where she is successful and well liked because she is “quick and light on her feet.” When the “Fred’s Friends” band comes to play at the restaurant, there’s barely time for a pirouette before Belinda’s big but talented feet have her dancing for the customers. It isn’t long after that that the Maestro of the Grand Metropolitan Ballet discovers Belinda and brings her to his stage to dance: “Magnificent!” the judges cried. “We have discovered a swallow, a dove, a gazelle!” They didn’t even notice the size of her feet. They were too busy watching her dance.” At first glance this looks like a fluffy piece of wishful thinking, but Belinda’s triumph will resonate with all the kids (and grownups) who have ever been judged before being given a chance to prove themselves. Both text and illustrations have an emotional kick for readers and listeners (in one particularly affect-
ing scene, a heartbroken Belinda soaks in a gray tub, her big feet over the edge, the only real color in the room the pink dance costume and pink-striped towel draped over the gray chair, under text that reads, “Belinda was sad. She stayed sad for a long time”). Young’s gouache illustrations offer vibrant colors and vigorous action. Belinda herself is a graceful Olive Oyl in a pink tutu (with huge pink toe shoes), who will ingratiate herself with every would-be ballerina who chances to encounter her. JMD


Reviewed from galleys

Farmer Donald successfully digs up a dozen fence posts (“He used a shovel and a pickax and his two strong arms”), leaving one dozen perfect little holes in the ground. When Mother Duck goes out walking with her dozen new ducklings, “she was sure they were in a straight line right behind her tail.” Well, they certainly start out from the pond that way, but ducklings meet postholes and, one by one, eight of them disappear, leaving Mother Duck calling them to no avail. With Farmer Donald’s help Mother Duck retraces her steps, locates her peeping ducklings, and all is well. Mother Duck counts those baby ducklings up from one to twelve and back down again from twelve to one several times in this simple suspense story, and the circular plot (the ducklings wind up back at the pond after being suitably admired) provides a comforting bit of closure while listeners painlessly absorb both the counting lesson and the concept of “an even dozen.” Dreifuss’ naive, impressionistic paintings have a simplicity of composition that makes them easy to for group viewing, with the fluffy yellow ducklings standing out against the verdant background. Additional information about the habits of ducks and ducklings is appended in a section called “Farmer Donald Says.” Preschoolers will appreciate the gravity of the situation even as they reiterate the lost ducklings’ refrain: “Peep! Peep!” JMD

In our March review of Mariah Fredericks’ The True Meaning of Cleavage, we mistakenly indicated that the publication date was the year 20043. Fortunately, eager readers will not actually have to wait another eighteen thousand years to acquire this title; the book’s correct publication date is 2003.
The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Avi for *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* (Hyperion). The Newbery Honor Books are *The House of the Scorpion*, by Nancy Farmer (Jackson/Atheneum); *Pictures of Hollis Woods*, by Patricia Reilly Giff (Lamb/Random House); *Hoot*, by Carl Hiaasen (Knopf); *A Corner of the Universe*, by Ann M. Martin (Scholastic); and *Surviving the Applewhites*, by Stephanie S. Tolan (HarperCollins).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to Eric Rohmann for *My Friend Rabbit*, written by the illustrator (Roaring Brook). The Caldecott Honor Books are *The Spider and the Fly*, illus. by Tony DiTerlizzi, written by Mary Howitt (Simon); *Hondo & Fabian*, written and illus. by Peter McCarty (Holt); and *Noah's Ark*, adapted and illus. by Jerry Pinkney (SeaStar).

The Coretta Scott King Award for writing will be presented to Nikki Grimes, author of *Bronx Masquerade* (Dial), and the award for illustration goes to E. B. Lewis for *Talkin' about Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman*, written by Nikki Grimes (Orchard). The King Honor Books for writing are *Talkin' about Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman*, written by Nikki Grimes (Dial), and *Red Rose Box*, written by Brenda Woods (Putnam). The King Honor Books for illustration are *Rap a Tap Tap: Here's Bojangles—Think of That!,* written and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (Blue Sky); and *Visiting Langston*, illus. by Bryan Collier, written by Willie Perdomo (Holt).

The American publisher receiving the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is The Chicken House/Scholastic for Cornelia Funke's *The Thief Lord*; the honor award goes to David R. Godine for *Henrietta and the Golden Eggs*, written by Hanna Johansen and illustrated by Kathi Bhend.

The Michael L. Printz Award for a book that exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature goes to Aidan Chambers for *Postcards from No Man's Land* (Dutton). Honor books are *Hole in My Life*, by Jack Gantos (Farrar), *My Heartbeat*, by Garret Freymann-Weyr (Houghton), and *The House of the Scorpion*, by Nancy Farmer (Jackson/Atheneum).

The Robert F. Sibert Award for most distinguished informational book for children goes to James Cross Giblin for *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler* (Clarion). Honor books are *Six Days in October: The Stock Market Crash of 1929*, by Karen Blumenthal (Atheneum); *Hole in My Life*, by Jack Gantos (Farrar); *Action Jackson*, by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan, illus. by Robert Andrew Parker (Porter/Roaring Brook); and *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson*: \[...\]
The Voice of a Century, written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, illus. by Brian Selznick (Scholastic).

Eric Carle is the recipient of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award.

The 2004 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture will be delivered by Ursula LeGuin.

Nancy Garden is the 2003 winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Outstanding Literature for Young Adults honoring an author’s lifetime contribution in writing books for teenagers.

The Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction goes to Shelley Pearsall for Trouble Don’t Last (Knopf).

The Canadian Library Association’s Best Book of the Year for children is Jean Little’s Orphan at My Door: The Home Child Diary of Victoria Cope (Scholastic). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator’s Award goes to Frances Wolfe for Where I Live, written by the illustrator (Tundra). The Young Adult Canadian Book Award goes to William Bell for Stones (Doubleday).

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Terry Pratchett for The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents (HarperCollins).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to Chris Riddell for Pirate Diary, written by Richard Platt (Candlewick).

The Hans Christian Andersen Award for writing goes to Aidan Chambers of the United Kingdom. The award for illustration goes to Quentin Blake of the United Kingdom.

NCTE’s Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children goes to When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson: The Voice of a Century, by Pam Muñoz Ryan; illus. by Brian Selznick (Scholastic); Honor Books are Confucius; The Golden Rule, by Russell Freedman, illus. by Frédéric Clément (Levine/Scholastic); The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China, by Jane O’Connor (Viking); Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story about Brain Science, by John Fleischman (Houghton); Tenement: Immigrant Life on the Lower East Side, by Raymond Bial (Houghton); and To Fly: The Story of the Wright Brothers, by Wendie C. Old, illus. by Robert Andrew Parker (Clarion).

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

Abuse—fiction: Frost
ADVENTURE: Chen; Morpurgo; Morris; Torrey; Wein
African Americans: McKissack
ALPHABET BOOKS: Allen
Animals: Leedy
Animals—poetry: Stern
Arithmetic: Schwartz
Art: Brodsky
Asian Americans—stories: Cheng
Babies—stories: Gutman
Balloons—fiction: Milgrim
Baseball—stories: Adler *Mama*
Baths—stories: Van Laan
Bats—fiction: Naylor; Oppel
BEDTIME STORIES: Yolen *How*
Biology: Facklam
BIOGRAPHIES: Adler *Lewis*
Books and reading—stories: Daly; Allen
Brothers—fiction: Corbet
Brothers and sisters—fiction: Gray
Brothers and sisters—stories: Hughes
Butterflies: Patent
Cambodia—fiction: Ho
Campers and camping—fiction: Mills
Cats—poetry: Florian
China—fiction: Chen
Civil War: McKissack
Colors—stories: Holwitz
COUNTING BOOKS: Ziefert
Cousins—fiction: White
Cowboys and cowgirls: Talbert
Crime and criminals—fiction: Lowry; Naylor; Pierce; Stenhouse
Crocodiles—stories: Vrombaut
Cultural studies: Brodsky; Sneve

CUMULATIVE STORIES: Cullen
Dancers and dancing—fiction: Freymann-Weyr
Dancers and dancing—stories: Isadora; Young
Death—fiction: Hoffman
Dinosaurs—stories: Yolen *How*
Disabilities—fiction: Lowry
Disabilities—stories: Munsch
Disasters—fiction: Hoffman
Divorce—fiction: Weaver
Dogs—fiction: Hearne; Swallow
Dogs—poetry: Florian
Dogs—stories: Gutman; Kolar
Ducks—fiction: Luthardt
Ducks—stories: James; Ziefert
Emotions—stories: Lichtenheld
Ethics and values: Crum;
Freymann-Weyr; McCarthy;
Mills; O’Dell; Rouillard; Swallow
Explorers and exploring: Adler *Lewis*
Explorers and exploring—fiction: Torrey
Families—poetry: Bennett
Families—stories: Banks
FANTASY: Brown; Chen; Cooper;
Mahy; Oppel; Pierce
Farms—stories: Ziefert
Fathers—fiction: Corbet; Freymann-Weyr; Mahy
Fathers—stories: Harel; Vestergaard
Daddy
Films and filming—stories: Avi
FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES:
Batt; Fowlkes; Milligan
Friends and friendship—fiction:
Benduhn; O’Dell
Friends and friendship-stories:
   Bluthenthal; Gutman; Holwitz
Frogs-fiction: Müller
Games-stories: James
Gardens-stories: Cheng
Gays and lesbians-fiction: Benduhn
Gods and goddesses-stories:
   Bluitgen
Grandmothers-stories: Cheng
Growing up-fiction: Saldaña
Health:
   Vrombaut
HISTORICAL FICTION:
   Avi; Crum; Ho; Lowry; Stenhouse; Sullivan; White
History, U.S.:
   Adler Lewis; McKissack
History, world:
   Torrey; Wilson
Horses-fiction: Cooper
Horses-stories: Milligan
HUMOR:
   Brown; Lichtenheld; Morris; Müller
Illness-stories: Yolen How
Imagination-stories: McCarthy; Roberts
Immigrants-fiction: Avi; Ho
Immigrants-stories: Recorvits
Independence-stories: Eriksson
Inuit-fiction: Sullivan
Ireland-folklore: Milligan
Islands-fiction: Morpurgo
Knights and chivalry-fiction:
   Morris; Wein
Language arts:
   Leedy; Stern
Language-stories: Recorvits
Latinos-fiction: Saldaña
Magic-fiction: Pierce
Magic-stories: Fowles
Measurement:
   Schwartz
Mice-fiction: Milgrim
Mothers and daughters-stories:
   Adler Mama
Mothers-fiction: Gray
Mothers-stories: Banks; Vestergaard
   Mama
Moving-stories: Recorvits
MYSTERIES:
   Naylor
Mythology, classical:
   Yolen
   Atalanta
Native Americans:
   Brodsky; Sneve
Native Americans-fiction:
   Stenhouse
Nature study:
   Facklam; Patent
Orphans-fiction: White
Parties-fiction: Bluthenthal
Persecution-fiction: Ho
Perseverance-stories: Young
Pets-stories: Rouillard
Philosophy:
   Snape
Pigs-stories: Eriksson
POETRY:
   Bennett; Florian; Frost; Stern
Poverty-fiction: Crum
Races-stories: Kolar
Racism-fiction: Stenhouse; Sullivan
Reading aloud:
   Brown; Cooper; Floriana; Lichtenheld; Naylor
Reading, beginning:
   Luthardt; Milgrim
Reading, easy:
   Brown; Cooper; Harel
Reading, reluctant:
   Facklam; Lichtenheld
Relationships-fiction: O'Dell
Religious education:
   Bluitgen
RHYMING STORIES:
   Isadora; Vestergaard; Yolen How
Robots-fiction: Milgrim
ROMANCE:
   Corbet
School-fiction: Codell; Mills
School-stories: Daly
Shopping-stories: Eriksson
SHORT STORIES:
   Hearne; Saldaña
Slavery:
   McKissack
South Africa-stories: Daly
Storytime:
   Banks; Cullen; Eriksson; Harel; Hughes; James; McCarthy; Munsch; Roberts; Ziefert
Supernatural powers-fiction: Mahy
Teachers-fiction: Codell
Teachers-stories: Rouillard
Teeth-stories: Vrombaut
Time travel-fiction: Gray
TODDLER BOOKS:
   Vestergaard
Voyages and travel-fiction: Torrey
Water-stories: Cullen
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