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### Book Pair

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Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Sammy Keys and the Runaway Elf*. Knopf, 2000. ISBN 0-375-80255-X. \$4.99. 186 pages. Grades 4-8. Reprint. After a dog she is watching disappears from a city parade and the owner receives a ransom note, thirteen-year-old Sammy must use her detective skills to solve the mystery.

Wells, Rosemary. *Timothy Goes to School*. Illustrated by Rosemary Wells. Puffin, 2000. ISBN 0-14-056742-9. \$5.99. 32 pages. Grades K-3. Reprint. Timothy learns about being accepted and making friends during the first week of his first year at school.

Werlin, Nancy. *The Killer's Cousin*. Laurel-Leaf, 2000. ISBN 0-440-22751-8. \$4.99. 229 pages. Grades 7+. Reprint. After being acquitted of murder, seventeen-year-old David goes to stay with relatives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he finds himself forced to face his past as he learns more about his strange young cousin Lily.



Submitted by Sarah Olson

### Different Reading Levels

Rose, Deborah Lee. *Into the A, B, Sea: An Ocean Alphabet*. Illustrated by Steve Jenkins. Scholastic Press, 2000. ISBN 0-439-09696-0. 40 pp. **Grades 1-3.**

Patten, Brian. *The Blue and Green Ark: An Alphabet For Planet Earth*. Scholastic Press, 2000. ISBN 0-439-07969-1. 64 pp. **Grades 4-6.**

Among an avalanche of alphabet books that have been published recently, these two stand

out for two reasons: (1) their focus on Mother Nature and her creations, and (2) incomparable illustrations. Both of these books use the letters of the alphabet in tandem with a brilliantly depicted environmental awareness. (Each book concludes with a glossary.)

*Into the A, B, Sea* is an alphabet book in its truest sense. Designed for younger readers, this book uses short phrases to describe the active life of our marine world. "Dive into the A, B, Sea where...Eels explore and Flying fish soar." Jenkins' paper collage illustrations are breathlessly accurate and strikingly beautiful. Young and old alike will enjoy reading this alphabet book.

In contrast to the simplicity of *Into the A, B, Sea*, *The Blue and Green Ark* is an elegantly illustrated book designed for more advanced readers. Rather than using nature to highlight the alphabet, Patten uses the alphabet to highlight the wonders of nature. Each letter is accompanied by a poetic reflection, as well as a full-spread illustration cast by one of this book's eleven magnificent illustrators. "F is for the Fire around which Neanderthal man crouched / ... / It is for the flight of migrating birds and the frontiers beneath them / For the fish, floating like golden submarines beneath lily-pads." Because *The Blue and Green Ark* is a collaboration of illustrators, each page has its own style, medium, and tone. It is as much a visual delight as it is textual.

These books illustrate the way a common theme, such as the alphabet, can be arranged to serve a variety of purposes as well as appeal to a spectrum of ages.