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Full Issue

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Skalak, Barbara Anne. *Waddle, Waddle, Quack, Quack, Quack*. Illustrated by Long, Sylvia. Chronicle Books LLC, 2005. ISBN 0811843424. \$14.95. 30 p.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Juvenile--fiction;

Subject: Ducks--Fiction; Lost children--Fiction; Stories in rhyme; Books--Reviews;

Mama duck is sitting on her cozy nest watching anxiously as her eggs begin to crack from the tapping of the ducklings inside. Very soon, all five are hatched and ready to explore the big world outside. Mama leads them quickly to the lake, where they learn to swim and dive for pondweeds. But one little duck drifts off into the reeds and is lost. He must swim through the big waves of a sudden storm and wander across a meadow, searching everywhere for his family. He finally returns to the lake, calling "peep, peep, peep," and Mama finds him just as dusk is falling. Back to the safety of the nest they waddle, huddling close together as "Moon climbs in her bed of black, 'Sweet dreams,' says Mama, 'quack, quack, quack. '"

If you're searching for a cozy new read-aloud for bedtime (or anytime), *Waddle, Waddle, Quack, Quack, Quack* is exactly the right story to choose. The simple, rhymed text has a wonderful rhythm, punctuated by sound effects that young children will love to imitate, such as "tap, tap, tap," or "glup, glup, glup." The pen and ink line drawings, in a soft sepia brown, form the basis for superb watercolor illustrations, rich in detail. The text is printed in the same gentle brown as the lines in the drawings, further softening the overall effect. Little duck's journey across a meadow filled with bright wildflowers provides a splash of contrasting color that heightens his adventure. Be prepared to read this appealing story again and again to toddlers and pre-schoolers, who will understand little duck's fear when he is lost, excitement as he explores, and enormous relief when he returns to his mama and family, who missed him and will keep him safe.

Levin, Vadim. *Silly horse*. Illustrated by Evgeny Antonenkov. Pumpkin House, 2005. ISBN 096460101X. \$15.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy poetry; Humorous poetry;

Subject: Children's poetry, Russian--Translations into English--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Originally published in Russia in 1969, "Silly Horse" has arrived in the United States just this year. Levin's poetry is as silly as the horse of the title, and seems expertly translated for this edition by Wolfson and Zunshine. The poetry is a delight, as in "A Little Poem About Big Rain": "For a month the sky's been grey/All we get is rain all day:/Soaking houses, trees and leaves,/Dripping noses, shoes and sleeves,/Soggy ground is soaked right through,/Parks and fields are soaking too,/And too far away to see/Ships are soaking in the sea." Antonenkov's pictures are every whit as fine. Rich, evocative - one might even say Slavic - coloring and scratchy textures make this book a memorable, satisfying read for children and adults.

O'Flatharta, Antoine. *Hurry and the Monarch*. Illustrated by Meilo So. Random House, 2005.
ISBN 037583003. \$14.95. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Preschool

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Butterflies-Juvenile fiction; Tortoises-Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Hurry the Tortoise lives in Wichita Falls and one day, as winter approaches, a monarch butterfly lands on his shell. Hurry and the Monarch visit about their differing ways of spending the winter; the Monarch leaves for Mexico while Hurry settles down to wait for the inevitable return of spring. When spring comes again, The Monarch passes back through Hurry's garden in, lays her eggs, and then flies on to a timely demise on a restaurant curtain in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Her child lives to emerge from a cocoon and talk to Hurry before flying away to see the world.

Hurry and the Monarch has some uneven spots, but on the whole is a good general introduction to children about migratory species, Monarch butterflies, and the wonders of nature. The obvious comparisons between the aged tortoise and the short-lived insect work well in the story. The illustrations are good, but neither the text nor the pictures will give the child a sense of distance or changing landscapes. However, the story has a sweet feel for nature and her creatures.

San Souci, Robert D. *Zigzag*. Illustrated by Stefan Czernecki. August House Little Folk, 2005. ISBN 0874837642. \$16.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture Book

Subject: Dolls--Juvenile fiction; Mice--Juvenile fiction; Toys--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews

A dollmaker stitches from scraps a strange looking doll with spiked hair and tiny wings. She names the creation Zigzag as she sews his sad, zigzag mouth. The dollmaker assures him, "Some child will love you," but that night the other dolls and stuffed animals make fun of him and squeeze him off the shelf into the wastebasket. In the morning, the dollmaker unknowingly empties Zigzag into the rubbish and so begins his quest to find the right child to love him and give him a reason to smile.

Master storyteller San Souci brings his folkloric style to this simple story of rejection and acceptance. As with traditional folktales, there are lessons to learn from Zigzag's story, and the text provides adults with the opportunity to open a discussion with young people on topics of physical differences, discrimination, name-calling, rejection, and true friends. Bright, bold fabric and paper figures on a white background create characters that interact with one another and the text. With its eye-popping illustrations and accessible theme, this picture book makes an appealing read-aloud for families, school classes, and library story times. Beware parents and grandparents: some young readers may want their own Zigzag to love.

Harley, Bill. *Dear Santa: The Letter of James B. Dobbins*. Illustrated by R.W. Alley. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0066237792. \$16.89. 32 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Christmas stories;

Subject: Santa Claus--Juvenile fiction; Letters--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Early in December, James B. Dobbins sends Santa Claus a rather extravagant Christmas list. Then, in almost daily letters, James adds to his list; highlights his good behavior, even with "THE MOST ANNOYING FOUR-YEAR-OLD SISTER ON THE PLANET;" and explains some lapses in judgment. As the month progresses, his letters become less about his wants and more about the pleasure James (now Jim or Jimmy in his signatures)finds in making, buying, and giving gifts to others.

With his typical wit and child-like enthusiasm, Harley captures the excitement of Christmas in these letters to Santa. Alley's energetic illustrations add to the humor and make the letters a delight to share with young audiences. Teachers and parents could use this picture book to inspire some letter writing or realistic wish lists. Santa himself will laugh when he reads this mail.

Berenzy, Alix. *Sammy : the Classroom Guinea Pig*. Illustrated by Berenzy, Alix. Illustrated by Berenzy, Alix. Henry Holt and Co., 2005. ISBN 0805040242. \$16.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Emily Hreha

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Picture Book

Subject: Guinea pigs--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

"WHEEP!" Sammy the guinea pig greets Ms. B and her classroom of students each school day. Sammy is happy in his little house with his soft blue sock, his food bowl filled with guinea pig pellets, and water to drink. On one busy Monday morning, a persistent, bothering feeling makes Sammy shriek "WHEEEP!" at the top of his lungs. As Ms. B and her students try to determine what is wrong with Sammy, they rule out Sammy being sick, frightened, and hurt until Maria realizes that what Sammy needs is the attention of Ms. B and her students.

Alix Berenzy, author and illustrator of this title, teaches the reader a variety of facts about guinea pigs through her narrative. The last page ends with a list of five facts about guinea pigs, making this book a good read for a new owner of a guinea pig. Berenzy does not, however, list any documentation of where she found her information on guinea pigs. A bibliography or a "For more information" list would be helpful since it seems that one of Berenzy's goals is to educate the reader on guinea pigs. Berenzy's soft colored pencil illustrations of Sammy's face are full of expression.

Spirin, Gennady. *Martha*. Philomel Books, 2005. ISBN 0399239804. \$14.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Marilyn Lee

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Birds--Juvenile fiction; Family--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Award winning Gennady Spirin tells a gentle and engaging story of his family's experience with a wounded crow found by his son, Ilya, and named Martha. The text is simple and unobtrusive. It describes the enchanting illustrations which show every small and distinctly Russian detail of the environment. The story is driven by the question "What will Martha do?" but is also a background revealing the loving, nurturing and patient kindness of Ilya. The lovely watercolors create a beautiful vignette for this tender experience. This book will charm and delight the reader.

Young, Ed. *Beyond the Great Mountains. A Visual Poem about China*. Illustrated by Young, Ed. Chronicle Books LLC, 2005. ISBN 0-8118-4343-2. \$17.95. Unpaginated.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Nonfiction;

Subject: China--Juvenile fiction

This ingenious presentation of what Young calls "visual verse" is an eloquent tribute to his homeland of China. The text consists of a fourteen-line poem describing the vast and beautiful landscapes of China. The book is designed to open from the bottom and has graduated pages so the reader sees the entire poem immediately. As the reader turns the pages, s/he sees only one line of the poem along with a picture that illustrates the meaning of that line. Young's illustrations consist of cut, torn and painted papers all of which combine to give his work texture. Each illustration is in double-page format and includes ancient Chinese characters in red with their English translation in black. A careful reader will notice the similarities between the images in the illustration and the accompanying Chinese character: the character for mountain resembles a mountain; the character for river resembles a river, and so on. Young includes an author's note explaining his concept of visual verse as well as a chart of Chinese characters showing how they have changed from ancient to modern times. Especially enjoyable is Young's ability to capture the way Chinese poetry sounds when translated into English. Although the poetry might be too abstract for some younger readers, the illustrations, Chinese characters, and Young's evident love for his homeland should capture and hold their attention.

Alcott, Louisa May. *An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving*. Illustrated by Bernardin, James. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060004517. \$16.89. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gabi Kupitz

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction; Holiday stories;

Subject: Family life--Juvenile fiction; Thanksgiving Day--Juvenile fiction; New England--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Two sisters in a large New England family roll up their sleeves and get to work to make a Thanksgiving dinner when their parents are called away to attend to an ailing grandmother. Culinary mishaps occur, but the children manage to put together a delicious dinner that warms the immediate family as well as arriving aunts, uncles, cousins--an even Grandma. The full-color illustrations capture the abbreviated Alcott text. A feel-good holiday story that transports the reader to another time, yet the situation and go-to attitude of the children is timeless. Includes "Louisa May Alcott's Apple Slump" recipe.

Raimondo, Joyce. *Express Yourself! Activities and Adventures in Expressionism*. Watson-Guptill, 2005. ISBN 0823025063. \$12.95. 48 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Art--Expressionism--Juvenile Literature; Books--Reviews;

Joyce Raimondo uses the works of six artists to teach young readers about Expressionism. She devotes one chapter each to Edvard Munch, Vincent van Gogh, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Vasily Kandinsky, Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. Each chapter highlights several of the artist's most important works and explains what makes them stand out. Two things are especially pleasing about this book. First, Raimondo includes a set of questions designed to foster creative thinking and understanding of art. She invites readers to compare and contrast the various works. Second, each chapter includes two art projects designed to encourage children to create a work in the style of the artist using media from watercolor paints to clay. Each project is designed to accomplish a certain goal such as expressing emotion by using line and color or painting something that frightens you. Additionally, there are introductory sections for adults and children explaining what expressionism is and how the book can be helpful in understanding it. The text is lively and passionate about art. Useful art terms are highlighted in bold. There are a total of 25 activities and 100 full color photographs. Raimondo also includes a short biography of each artist.

Pilobolus. *The Human Alphabet*. Illustrated by John Kane. Roaring Brook Press, 2005. ISBN 1596430664. \$16.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational Books;

Subject: English language--Alphabet--Juvenile Literature; Books--Reviews;

This striking book presents a unique way of looking at the alphabet. The fifteen dancers of Pilobolus Dance Theater twist and bend themselves into shapes representing the letters of the alphabet. One letter is depicted in a small box on each page of the book. The dancers then illustrate an object whose name begins with that particular letter. It is obvious that there are some trick shots required to obtain the desired effect, but the photography is very colorful and clever. The only text appears on the first page, inviting the reader to guess what objects are represented by the dancers. The shapes are stunning and creative although several are actually quite difficult to interpret. Some children might be more interested in the shapes than what they are intended to represent. A key is included. This book would make a nice addition to a library looking for a more imaginative approach to the alphabet. Pilobolus was founded in 1971 by dancers at Dartmouth College and combines athletics, gymnastics, acrobatics and modern dance.

Lowry, Lois. *Gooney Bird and the Room Mother*. Illustrated by Thomas, Middy. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005. ISBN 0618532307. \$15.00. 80 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous stories; Holiday stories;

Subject: Schools--Juvenile fiction; Thanksgiving Day-- Juvenile fiction; Humorous stories-- Juvenile fiction;

Spirited, imaginative second grader Gooney Bird Greene is back--just as engaging as in Lois Lowry's 2002 novel featuring this highly entertaining young lady. Young readers will readily identify with the atmosphere and activities of a 2nd grade classroom as Thanksgiving looms. The children are hard at work on a pageant to celebrate, when two major problems present themselves:

- 1) Everyone wants to play the role of Squanto, but only one person can be chosen.
- 2) Cupcakes for refreshments after the pageant are supplied by the room mother, but the 2nd grade class is the only class in the school without a room mother.

The teacher, Mrs. Pidgeon, has a flash of inspiration. The role of Squanto will go to the student who finds a 2nd grade room mother (and therefore pageant cupcakes). Gooney Bird excuses herself for a few minutes from pageant rehearsal and returns to announce that she is Squanto; she has found a room mother, whose name must be INCOGNITO until the day of the pageant.

The reader, whether young or older, is joyfully transported right into a classroom of children as varied in personality and point of view, as unique, and, occasionally, as frustrating as those in a real classroom. Gooney Bird's irrepressible enthusiasm for story telling, new vocabulary words, and unusual clothing combinations, coupled with a "can do" attitude, make for a thoroughly likeable and engaging heroine. The pageant day excitement continues right up to the very last page, when the identity of the mysterious room mother is finally revealed in a touching and very satisfying finale.

The Middy Thomas illustrations add just the right touch to a humorous and slightly sentimental story that will certainly leave readers wanting another visit with Gooney Bird Greene!

Burleigh, Robert. *Toulouse-Lautrec: the Moulin Rouge and the city of light*. Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2005. ISBN 0810959678. \$17.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de, 1864-1901--Juvenile literature; Artists--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

It is the year 1882; Paris is the center of entertainment and excitement for the whole Western world. Among the glitz and glamour of a new era of electricity and innovation, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec embarks on the great adventure of his life. Born into a life of privilege, Lautrec was expected to follow in the footsteps of his father, but a crippling illness and an unquenchable passion for drawing changed the direction of his dreams. Against the wishes of his family, he set off to work in Paris, where his innovative and lively artistic style revolutionized poster art and became an inspiration for generations of artists after him.

Illustrated with photos and full-color reproductions, this oversized book is an excellent introduction to the art, life, and times of Toulouse-Lautrec. Burleigh writes in a conversational style, making the book easy to read. The page layout uses typography, inserts, and side-bars, as well as Lautrec's own works in pencil, watercolor, oil and other mediums to provide a vibrant representation of Paris at the end of the nineteenth century. A bibliography and author's note also provide additional information not addressed in the text itself. All in all, the book provides a frank and accessible view of a man whose work has been lastingly influential on art history.

Cooling, Wendy. *D is for Dahl: a glorumptious A-Z guide to the world of Roald Dahl*.
Illustrated by Blake, Quentin. Viking, 2005. ISBN 0670060232. \$15.99. 149 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Dahl, Roald--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Dahl's classic children's books are delightfully funny, wicked, and thoughtful - all the best and worst in childhood can be found in *Matilda*, *The Witches*, and *James and the Giant Peach*. All the wonder, magic, and mischief of Dahl and his stories are celebrated in *D is for Dahl*, an alphabet of Dahl, his life and work. There are mostly stories from Dahl's own life ("N is for Nose") and some from his writings ("R is for Revolting Rhymes"). This book also gives great information about the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, now in Dahl's hometown of Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire, England and the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery in the Buckinghamshire County Museum. There is also a Roald Dahl Foundation, which donates funds to programs for hematology, literacy, and neurology. A great insight into a great author and man, and an outright joy to read.

Fardell, John. *The 7 professors of the far north*. Illustrated by John Fardell. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005. ISBN 039924381X. \$14.99. 217 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories;

Subject: Adventure and adventurers--Juvenile fiction; Arctic regions--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Eleven year old Sam Carnabie is not looking forward to staying with his Great-Aunt Roberta while his parents are away at a nutrition conference, so he is delighted when Professor Ampersand, a friend of his parents, pulls up in a bright yellow motorcycle with a bullet-shaped sidecar with two children inside. The professor invites Sam to join him, Zara, and Ben for the week in Edinburgh. That very night an exhausted traveler stumbles into the professor's house with dreadful news: "Professor Murdo has returned to Nordbergen." What follows is the adventure of a lifetime for the three children, as Professor Ampersand and his colleagues are kidnapped by minions of the evil Murdo and taken to an isolated island in the Arctic Circle. The children are their only hope, and they come through after many adventures on a secret underground transit system, sailing the ice-covered water in a badly damaged ski-boat, and entering Professor Murdo's secret lair in five-person submarine.

Readers who miss the Tom Swift books will love *The 7 Professors of the Far North*. Eccentric characters and courageous, resourceful children fill these pages with non-stop action as the fate of humankind hangs in the balance. Though the children's characters are a bit flat - it's not always easy to tell them apart - their wild adventures and unyielding determination to save the professors makes this a book designed to engage even the most reluctant young reader.

Davis, Kenneth C.. *Don't Know Much About World Myths*. Illustrated by Ruzzier, Sergio. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060286067. \$20.89. 144 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Nonfiction;

Subject: World Mythology--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Don't Know Much About World Myths follows the same question and answer format as the other books in Davis' "Don't Know Much About . . ." series. Davis begins his latest addition with an explanation of what mythology is and how myths, legends, fables, and folktales differ. He points out that there are common themes to every region's mythology: how the earth and man were created, the story of a great flood, and man's relationship to the divine. The text covers mythologies of the Middle East, Far East, South Pacific, Mediterranean, Africa, Northern Europe and the Americas. Each section includes boxes containing bits of trivia. For example, the "Mythic Link" boxes draw connections between mythologies with a common link, such as how the story of Romulus and Remus is similar to the story of Cain and Abel. Davis also includes references to modern myths such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter* and the *Star Wars* movies. Scattered through the text are Sergio Ruzzier's cartoon-like drawings as well as some black and white photographs. Davis' book is a dependable reference work and starting point for readers interested in learning more about world myths.

Kogler, Jennifer Anne. *Ruby Tuesday*. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060739568. \$16.89. 307 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Self-perception--Juvenile fiction; Gambling--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Eleven, going on twelve, year old Ruby Tuesday comes of age. She discovers that her math-whiz-father, Hollis, figures the odds for an illegal bookie in Las Vegas. When the bookie is murdered, Hollis is the chief suspect. Ruby's glamorous mother, Marlene (who Ruby thought had deserted her), arrives to whisk Ruby off to Las Vegas to be with her high living grandmother, out of a possibly dangerous situation, and to cash in on her father's bet that is worth millions. Hollis is cleared by new information in the case. Grandmother dies and sends a letter to Ruby's father to explain that she persuaded a mobster to kill the bookie because the bookie was planning to kill her son, Ruby's father. Ruby intercepts the letter, finally decides to show it to her father who then has Ruby drop the incriminating evidence into the grave with her grandmother. 'All's well that ends well' as Ruby decides all her relatives really love her even if they do live outside or on the fringes of the law.

The story was fast moving with convincing characterizations of rather unusual people. The betting language is confusing but young readers may be quicker at learning it along with Ruby. It does end on a positive note with the heroine convinced that having the love of her family is the important thing. The reviewer's initial reaction was negative because of the life style of grandmother and mother but other reviewers said they thought some children in single parent homes might feel a kinship with Ruby and the problems with which the adults in her life are faced. They might find it encouraging reading with a positive ending.

Broach, Elise. *Shakespeare's Secret*. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN 0805073876. \$16.95. 250 p.

Reviewer: Mary Chapman

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Detective and Mystery Stories; Contemporary Realistic Fiction; Historical Fiction;

Subject: Shakespeare William -- Juvenile Fiction; Shakespeare William -- Authorship -- Juvenile Fiction; Friendship -- Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews

Hero is the new girl in 6th grade and not adjusting very well. Being named after a character in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* doesn't help either, and the teasing begins when one of the students in her class reveals that her pet dog's name is Hero too -- what a coincidence. Hero tries not to get too involved with Shakespeare stuff -- that's her dad's job, not hers. But, she can't ignore Shakespeare when she learns that a valuable diamond, possibly owned by Anne Boleyn and linked to the identity of the real Shakespeare, is hidden somewhere in her house. Mrs. Roth next door knows a lot about the diamond and is intent on being Hero's friend. And there's a boy named Danny, one of the most "popular" boys at school, who seems interested in being her friend too and finding that diamond with her.

This is an engaging mystery on several levels. Broach deftly intertwines the mystery of the missing diamond with the question of Shakespeare's identity. Kids will find this book hard to put down. Broach introduces interesting insight into Elizabethan history and theories about Shakespeare's writings and authorship. She also includes a brief historical note and a helpful timeline as end material. *Shakespeare's Secret* would be great way pique children's interest in Shakespeare. Broach creates believable characters and young readers will be able to relate to Hero's awkwardness at being the new kid in school and the way she deals with being tormented by insensitive classmates.

Riordan, Rick. *The Lightning Thief*. Hyperion, 2005. ISBN 0786856297. 17.95. 375 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Mythology, Greek--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Percy Jackson thinks his life is tough. He struggles with ADHD and always seems to be in trouble. He has attended one school after another and nothing seems to work out. On top of that he has a loser step-dad, and he doesn't even know who his real father is. But all his troubles seem like nothing compared to what he has to face once he finds out that his real dad is an Olympian god. Suddenly he is being chased by fiends from Hades and he has to depend on new-found skills and new-found friends to survive.

This fast-paced action adventure will appeal to even the most reluctant readers. In every chapter Percy is fighting for his life against a vast array of creatures from ancient mythology. Upper grade-school teachers who have Greek civilization in their curriculum will appreciate the many reference to stories from Greek mythology. The novel gives enough details about the mythological stories to carry the plot, but there is enough left unsaid to encourage additional research in the topic. Riordan has transposed some mythological ideas into fresh modern settings. For example, Ares appears on a tricked-out motorcycle dressed in black leather and spikes. Even children not familiar with mythology will enjoy Percy's adventures. The book will appeal to both boys and adventure-loving girls because one of Percy's side-kicks is a Hermione-like daughter of Athena. This is a truly auspicious a beginning to the "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" series.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett, ed. *Oh no! Where are My Pants! and other disaster poems*. Illustrated by Wolf Erlbruch. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 068817860X. \$15.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous poetry;

Subject: Conduct of life-Juvenile poetry; Emotions-Juvenile poetry; Books--Reviews;

From the title and cover art, one would assume *Oh, No! Where are My Pants* to be a book of strictly humorous poetry, but many of the poems here may be nostalgic and bittersweet for adults, and presently painful for children. Poems about a friend's moving away, the death of the school's pet rabbit, and a boy at camp who would rather be home are more about sorrows than disasters, and sorrows that may linger to this day for adult readers. That being said, this is a lovely little book, the spare but evocative pictures perfectly supplementing the poetry about winding up in a classroom without your best friend, yelling out that Tassalooma is the capital of Florida, and getting shoes instead of skates for Christmas.

Jones, Diana Wynne. *Conrad's Fate*. Greenwillow Books, 2005. ISBN 0060747439. \$16.99. 384 p.

Reviewer: Janet Francis

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Witchcraft--Juvenile fiction; Fantasy--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

One of the most substantial and reliable fantasy writers of Great Britain, Jones has nevertheless succumbed to the siren call of a series (The Chrestomanci Books) and stumbled a little in its depths. All of these books operate in alternate worlds and all have extraordinary levels of imagination, humor, character and intrigue. Somehow, this story of Conrad (who spends the entire action deluded by his trust of authority, relatives and close associates) falls short of the excitement level of the previous four books and seems to spend a good deal of time in loving description of the physical confusion of an enchanted landscape that keeps shifting format.

Conrad is sent to the city on top of the hill from his village to work in the reigning aristocrat's establishment and in addition to the shifting architecture, the reader gets a detailed rundown of how palace servants step up to maintain the place. In transit, Conrad becomes a close friend to Christopher Chant (a character who has traveled through the other books). Of course, Conrad (who has been told he is suffering from a deadly fate because of something he did in a former life) is commissioned to stop the evil at the top without knowing who, what or why and, of course, everything is ironed out in the end with some surprises, but the journey is not as fascinating as Jones is capable of making it. Although still much better than the average magic story, this book will appeal more to fans than to the casual reader.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Marshfield dreams: when I was a kid*. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN 080507242X. \$16.95. 192 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Autobiographies;

Subject: Fletcher, Ralph J.--Childhood and youth--Juvenile literature; Authors, American--20th century--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The author reflects on his childhood in Marshfield, Massachusetts, in this wonderfully nostalgic book. The small but significant events and patterns that build a childhood are reviewed and treasured in this book's short chapters. *Marshfield Dreams* feels a bit like Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*, only the style is simpler. The author reflects on experiences from his childhood, varying from spending a church meeting outside the chapel because of his large family to a daring rescue of the family's two pet roosters. More serious topics, such as the family's move from Massachusetts to Illinois, will connect young readers to the author's experiences. Adults will remember some of the magic in their childhoods through Fletcher's own reminiscences.

Gardner, Sally. *I, Coriander*. Dial Books, 2005. ISBN 0803730993. \$16.99. 280 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy tales; Historical Fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Fairies--Juvenile fiction; Mothers and daughters--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Coriander, a young girl in 17th century London, is awash in magical mystery. Between her mother's unexpected death, the discovery that her mother had been a real life fairy, and mysterious silver shoes that appear on her doorstep, Coriander doesn't know what to do. Her father leaves her with her wicked step mother and an evil Puritan preacher so he can go into hiding and escape hanging for treason. Her life with Maud and Arise is terrible because they take away everything that she has ever loved. When they finally make good on the threat to kill her by locking her up in a chest, Coriander unknowingly draws on the magical powers she has always had. She is somehow transported to an incredible land filled with fairies. This land is not without its problems, however--problems that Coriander must help resolve. She finds a fairy prince who is about to be married against his will. Feeling an undeniable connection with him, Coriander convinces the Prince to refuse to marry and that she will help him defeat the evil queen Rosmore who threatened to kill him if he didn't marry her daughter. She realizes that the only way to resolve all her conflicts is to find the fairy shadow her mother hid to remain in the human world. As soon as Coriander finds this shadow and returns it to its rightful owner, her father will come home, Prince Tycho will be free from danger, and she will once again have the whimsical, peaceful life that she longs for more than anything.

This is an entertaining story, full of suspense and whimsy. Gardner is a delightful writer, using beautifully descriptive writing to tell the story. The beginning was slightly confusing and it was hard to figure out what was happening, but she does a good job of explaining all of the storylines and tying up loose ends at the conclusion. The British history incorporated about Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans is very interesting and educational. Gardner does a wonderful job of weaving historical facts with the adventurous fairytale. A great read for those who love both fantasy and British history.

Grandcolas, Lauren Castuzzi. *You can do it!: the merit badge handbook for grown-up girls*.
Illustrated by Breckenreid, Julia. Chronicle, 2005. ISBN 0811846350. \$24.95. 495 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Women--life skills guides--Juvenile literature; Experiential learning--Juvenile literature;

Readers in need of motivation to follow a dream, a fantasy, or simply a whim can find it in Grandcolas' *You Can Do It!*. This book even comes with a set of merit-badge-like stickers for readers who complete an activity or reach a goal. Grandcolas had the idea for *You Can Do It!*, but her sisters made it a reality after Grandcolas was killed when United Airlines Flight 93 went down on September 11, 2001. In the spirit of Grandcolas' life, all the text is encouraging and uplifting in its style; the reader feels as if each subject's mentor is a new friend. Subjects range across many areas and skills including continuing one's education, wine-tasting, crafts and writing. This handbook is a broad introduction to whatever the readers' dreams may be, and how to put a solid foundation under their castles in the air.

Hiaasen, Carl. *Flush*. Knopf, 2005. ISBN 0375821821. \$16.95. 263 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous stories; Adventure stories;

Subject: Environmental protection--Juvenile fiction; Florida--Juvenile fiction; Fathers--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Noah's dad is in jail for sinking the Coral Queen casino boat, because the boat was dumping raw sewage after dark into the water off the Florida Keys. Unfortunately the Coral Queen is soon back in business and Mr. Underwood is under strict court order to stay away. So Noah and his sister Abbey decide to vindicate their father and stop the dumping by proving the Coral Queen is violating the law. Add to this mix some really smarmy bullies, a disgruntled former employee named Lice Peeking and his tough-as-nails girlfriend Shelly, the mystery of Noah's missing grandfather, and a dangerous plan to nail the Coral Queen and you have a laugh-out-loud adventure with a deeply satisfying (though a tad too tidy) conclusion.

Flush is reminiscent of Hiaasen's Newbery Honor-winning *Hoot*, only it is even funnier and more engaging. Noah and Abbey are likeable protagonists, and the family dynamics in this upper elementary/middle school book are refreshingly loving. The dialogue is snappy and the descriptions of the environment - and its befouling - are spot on. A bit of language towards the end of the story may disqualify this book for elementary library collections--parents and school librarians may wish to read the book before deciding whether or not to shelve it.

Davis, Sampson. *We beat the street: How a friendship pact led to success*. Dutton, 2005. ISBN 0525474072. \$16.99. 194 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Biography; Informational Books;

Subject: African American youth--New Jersey--Newark--Biography--Juvenile literature;
Friendship--Juvenile literature; Success--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The "Three Doctors," authors of *The Pact*, have come out with another book for young adult readers chronicling their experiences growing up in the ghetto and triumphing over great odds to become doctors. Davis, Hunt, and Jenkins present vignettes of their lives through the time they were young children to the time they all graduated from medical school and found practices out in the world. Each recounts his personal trials and what motivated him to keep trying and not backslide into the world of drugs and gangs that kills so many every day.

The writing is not all by the "Three Doctors" - Draper helped make it all into one unified narrative through a series of interviews. This makes for sometimes jumpy and stilted reading, but the drama of the doctors' lives and challenges comes through clearly. This book is aimed at inspiring young people in similar situations to the three boys to climb out of the despair and despondency of inner-city life and strive to become all that they can be. This book is worthwhile, exciting, and inspiring - a good guide for those in troubled times.

Lasky, Kathryn. *Broken Song*. Viking, 2005. ISBN 0670059315. \$15.99. 154 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Jews--Russia--History--19th century--Juvenile fiction; Violin--Fiction; Persecution--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Reuven Bloom, the young revolutionary firebrand who helped Sashie and her family escape from the Russian Tsar's persecutions in *The Night Journey*, tells his own frightening, yet triumphant, story of escape. 15-year-old Reuven is a gifted violinist, tempered and shaped by the magnificent music he produces. He narrowly escapes being kidnapped by the Cossacks for the Tsar's army because his parents repeatedly hide him in the family's potato hole beneath the floor boards of their home. During Hanukkah celebrations with his parents and two sisters, Reuven must once again climb down into the potato hole. Suddenly, screams and crashes accompany gunshots in his home. Reuven can barely make himself stay hidden, especially when a stray bullet blasts a large splinter of wood from the plank above his head. Looking through the opening, Reuven sees his sister murdered, and his own violin stolen by one of the Cossacks. In shock and without hope, he hears a whimpering from his 3-year-old sister, Rachel, who escapes death by being trapped in her crib under a fallen wardrobe, and is stirred to action. When he emerges, he lovingly covers his dead sister's body with a tapestry, sees his murdered parents in the doorway, and realizes he must prevent Rachel from seeing what has happened. It is now up to him to plan carefully and carry out their escape into Poland, and from there to America.

How Reuven manages to get himself and Rachel to safety makes for fascinating, yet sometimes harrowing reading. Reuven's humanity and sensitivity serve him well as he faces situations and decisions that could rob him of all feeling. He becomes a revolutionary and turns out to be a highly capable explosives expert. But Reuven's heart is not in the revolution. Instead of looking for a "new world," he is looking to repair a "broken world." The music inside him has been stilled for a season, but it reasserts itself in time to save him from murderous revenge on the Cossack who killed his family and stole his violin. Reuven's basic goodness and ability to care about people leads him to assist other Jews to escape, and, finally, to leave his "broken song" behind and begin a new one with his sister and other relatives in America. Because of the horror scenes, though sensitively handled by Lasky, this is a novel recommended for ages 10 and up. It would greatly enhance historical studies about Jewish pogroms in pre-revolutionary Russia, and could also be useful for psychology or sociology units. Skillfully crafted and carefully developed, this is a story that awakens sympathy for that which is best in humanity, as well as a horror for that which is harsh and evil. We are genuinely and gratefully relieved when Reuven is able to rise above the horror, re-awaken the music within him, and make a positive and satisfying life in a new land.