



Children's Book and Media Review

Volume 26
Issue 4 2006

Article 41

2005

Full Issue

Children's Book Review

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BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Review, Children's Book (2005) "Full Issue," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 26 : Iss. 4 , Article 41.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol26/iss4/41>

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Priddy, Roger. *First 100 Words*. Illustrated by Roger Priddy. Priddy Books, 2005. ISBN 0312495412. \$8.95. 14 p.

Reviewer: Charity Martin-Reno

Reading Level: Toddler

Rating: Dependable

Genre: educational baby;

Subject: Vocabulary--Juvenile literature;

This is a cardboard book of essential first words for baby to learn. From food and clothing to animals, colors, toys, and facial expressions (i.e., apple, duck, chair, cat, airplane, pink flower, cry, etc). Pictures are bright, largely in primary colors, and are actual photographs of the objects rather than drawings or paintings. There are nine pictures per page in evenly spaced squares. Recommended for older babies (8M+) and toddlers.

Yolen, Jane. *Soft House*. Illustrated by Wendy Anderson Halperin. Candlewick Press, 2005. ISBN 0763616974. \$15.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture Book;

Subject: Play--Juvenile fiction; Brother and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Cats--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Blankets and a flashlight are all you need to play "soft house." Yolen captures the feelings of Alison and her little brother Davey when they find themselves at a loss for what to do on a rainy day. Davey bravely ventures down the long hallway to gather the blankets. Alison gets the flashlight. Then the tricky business of building the house by draping the blankets over the living room couch and chairs and positioning couch cushions and pillows begins. Finally the "soft house" is complete and the children crawl inside. Freshly baked peanut-butter-crunch-chocolate-chip cookies, furnished by their mother, are the finishing touch to their afternoon of checkers, reading, playing with building blocks and other small toys under the magical illumination of a flashlight.

Regular indoor games and activities take on new vitality and interest when inside one of these smaller specially designed play houses. Halperin's realistic and detailed pencil and watercolor illustrations in soft colors bring a cozy feeling to the story. Many page spreads are a collage of illustrations. Especially beautiful is the last page spread which highlights the variety of the children's play inside their "soft house." *Soft House* is a positive story of the strengthening of a brother-sister relationship as they solve their disappointments with the weather and spend a memorable afternoon together indoors. When sharing this story with your children and grandchildren, be prepared to give parameters for building soft houses within your home, for they will surely want to try, even if it's sunny outside!

Freymann, Saxton. *Food for Thought: The Complete Book of Concepts for Growing*. Illustrated by Saxton Freymann. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005. ISBN 0439110181. \$14.95. 61 pp.

Reviewer: Rita Christensen

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Shapes--Juvenile literature; Colors--Juvenile literature; Counting--Juvenile literature; Fruit carving--Juvenile literature; Vegetables carving--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Food for Thought is a creative book that will amaze both children and adults. Various fruits and vegetables are artistically sculpted and juxtaposed to create silly, interesting, emotional, and color-saturated photo illustrations. The scenes introduce young children to a variety of concepts: shapes, colors, numbers, letters, and opposites. The characterization in the fruits and vegetables is mind-boggling; the shouting orange is startling, the happy tomato hippos are darling, and the strawberry dogs in love are sentimentally sweet. At the same time, Freymann exposes the reader to various foods and presents creative ideas on how to make veggie scenes at home. This multi-level learning book is printed in a large-format on durable paper.

Ault, Kelly. *Let's Sign! Every Baby's Guide to Communicating with Grownups*. Illustrated by Leo Landry. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. ISBN 0618507744. \$17.00. 77 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Toddler, All

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: American Sign Language--Juvenile literature; Infants--Language--Juvenile literature;

Parents who are eager to communicate with their toddlers will find this book a useful tool in learning and teaching basic American Sign Language. Arranged into three sections--Mealtime, Bedtime, and Playtime-- each double-page spread teaches one or two words. Illustrations are simple and friendly, as are the example sentences and instructions for each sign. An index of 63 words and phrases allows parents to find the words they most want their little one to know and use. All library collections for babies and toddlers should include this book, which could produce less frustrated babies and parents. A great gift for new babies.

Tharlet, Eve. *Nancy, the Little Gosling*. Illustrated by Eve Tharlet. Minedition, 2005. ISBN 0698400089. \$14.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Animal Stories;

Subject: Individuality--Juvenile fiction; Geese--Juvenile fiction; Butterflies--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Nancy, the gosling, is in training for waddling, flying, and swimming, but she would rather be looking at butterflies! She wants to be a butterfly researcher! Although Nancy's mother explains that these other skills will help her keep up with her fast-flying insect friends, Nancy is still miserable, because tomorrow is swimming lessons and Nancy hates water! The next day all the goslings have gathered at the edge of the pond for swimming lessons, when the unique butterfly Nancy has been chasing flitters by. Nancy quickly steps on the nearest lily pad, grabs its submerged stem, and by paddling with her other foot, skillfully surfs across the water to take a closer look at the butterfly. The other goslings watch in amazement and cheer as Nancy water surfs back to shore. Now everyone wants to learn how to water surf. This time Nancy is the teacher, and she will take the opportunity to teach her friends a little about butterflies, too!

This picture book is a fun way to and to emphasize that everyone has unique talents and abilities from which we can learn. Eve Tharlet, author and illustrator, will be remembered for her rabbit Davy books. It's fun to see the way Tharlet captures various gosling emotions by varying eyes, eyebrows, and beaks. A cute read-aloud.

Chaikin, Miriam. *Angel Secrets: Stories Based on Jewish Legend*. Illustrated by Leonid Gore. Henry Holt, 2006. ISBN 0805071504. \$18.95. 80 p.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Folklore;

Subject: Angels--Judaism--Juvenile literature; Legends, Jewish--Juvenile fiction; Midrash--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Mystical and mysterious, this book is an artful retelling of traditional Jewish legends. It brings to life specific angels, such as Raziel, Kasriel, Ya'asriel, Rafael, and Layla, and introduces Wheel angels, Angels of Forgetfulness, Guardian angels, Musician angels and countless others. Each defined class of angels has a specific purpose, a duty to perform in the divine task of "bringing Heaven closer to humans and humans closer to Heaven."

While neither text nor illustrations provide a clear understanding of the traditional sources, the book hints at rich and layered meanings in places and concepts such as the Prayer Path, the River-of-Angels, the Hall of Alphabet Angels, the Palace of Love, and the Evil Urge. Although *Angel Secrets* does not provide readers with a clear understanding of the legends, it may spark interest and invite them to find out more on their own. An index provides sources for some of the stories as well as information regarding the place of Midrashim in Jewish culture. Gore's illustrations are soft and impressionistic, subtly incorporating concepts introduced by the stories.

Mugford, Simon. *Sharks: and Other Dangers of the Deep*. Design by Matt Denny. St. Martin's Press, 2005. ISBN 0312495331. \$9.95. Unpaginated.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational;

Subject: Sharks--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Readers find themselves closer to dangerous, deep-sea creatures than is comfortable as they read *Sharks: and Other Dangers of the Deep*. The note on the inside cover--"We would like to reassure you that no designers, editors or photographers were eaten during the making of this book!"--sets the stage for an interesting read. The clever design of the book is by Matt Denny. Each page turn reveals a close-up color photograph of a shark or other dangerous sea creature. Important body parts or body features are identified on each photograph.

Twenty-one different sharks and nine other dangerous sea creatures are included (rays, eels, lionfish, jelly fish, porcupine fish, blue-ringed octopus). Each animal is given a "danger rating" from harmless (no jaws) to deadly (five jaws). A small illustration compares each animal's size to that of an adult human. The reader's eyes are drawn to the interesting text which is formatted in a variety of font types and sizes. Important verbs and nouns are highlighted with different colored rectangles. Even the edges of the pages have a colored checkerboard pattern. The thick, glossy, sturdy pages will survive heavy use in the hands of a young reader. The glossary inside the back cover is helpful. This selection will capture the attention of children interested in the sea and the wonders it offers for discovery. This affordable book would be a useful addition for school and home libraries.

Cheng, Andrea. *The Lemon Sisters*. Illustrated by Tatjana Mai-Wyss. Putnam's, 2006. ISBN 0399240233. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture Books;

Subject: Sisters--Juvenile fiction; Birthdays--Juvenile fiction; Old age--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

On her 80th birthday an elderly woman wakes up knowing "even without looking" that snow has fallen. From her window, she watches three little girls out playing in the snow. Their obvious enjoyment reminds her of time spent with Rita and May, her two younger sisters, when the three of them would go out and make "lemon ice" by sprinkling the snow with lemon and sugar. But Rita and May live far away now, and haven't come to visit in years. Lonely and disheartened, the woman brings out slices of lemon and a bag of sugar to the children, little knowing that shortly this day will become her best birthday yet.

With soft watercolor and collage illustrations, Mai-Wyss brings to life both young and old in this touching story of friendship and sisterhood. Although the topic may seem heavy for a children's book, *The Lemon Sisters* offers a poignant and heartwarming tale of friendships, both those newly made and those kept alive through a lifetime.

Ormerod, Jan. *Lizzie Nonsense*. Illustrated by Jan Ormerod. Clarion, 2005. ISBN 061857493X. \$15.00.
32 p.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Picture Book;

Subject: Imagination--Juvenile fiction; Australia--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When Papa goes into town, Lizzie, Mama and Baby are left alone in their little house in the Australian bush. To brighten the difficulties of pioneer life, Lizzie puts her imagination to work. For dinner, Lizzie imagines "peaches and cream and little sweet cakes," instead of "turnips, as usual." Imagining a dress, "with lots of frills and lace and bows," helps dull the tedium of mending everyday work clothes. Mama matter-of-factly refers to her daughter's imagination as "Lizzie nonsense." However, the loneliness of the Australian bush country affects people in different ways. Mama's pretending occurs on Sunday when the family puts on their best clothing and walks through the woods as if they were going to church.

Evocative and sincere, Ormerod's skillful watercolors bring to life the stark beauty of the pioneer experience, emphasizing the importance of courage and family. This poignant title would be a welcome addition to any library.

Calmenson, Stephanie. *Kindergarten Kids: Riddles, Rebuses, Wiggles, Giggles, and More*.
Illustrated by Melissa Sweet. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060007133. \$15.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic poetry;

Subject: Kindergarten--Juvenile poetry; Children's poetry, American; Books--Reviews;

The writer of this collection of 14 rhymes and puzzles clearly has experience with kindergarten classes. Each rhyme is ideally suited for kindergarten carpet time. Some like "Show and Tell" encourage dialogic reading while others like "Pizza Party" introduce simple math concepts. Calmenson has included poems for major holidays, such as Halloween, Valentine's Day and the 100th Day of School. There are also rhymes for saying "hello" and "good-bye," and for getting the wiggles out. All the rhymes are well-constructed and short enough for the attention spans of young children. Sweet's bright, bold illustrations depict multi-racial children having fun in kindergarten and perfectly compliment the energy of the rhymes. This book is a must for any kindergarten teacher and could also be used to help pre-kindergarten children feel excited to start school.

Meyers, Susan. *Puppies! Puppies! Puppies!* Illustrated by David Walker. Abrams, 2005. ISBN 0810958562. \$15.95. [32 p.]

Reviewer: Charity Martin-Reno

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture Book; Contemporary realistic poetry;

Subject: Dogs--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Infancy--Juvenile fiction; Stories in Rhyme; Books--Reviews;

The text follows the life of puppies from the moment they are born “with eyes shut tight,” through moving in with a new family, “getting bowls and beds and names,” and learning how to do things grown-up dogs do.

The musical cadence of rhyming couplets creates a smooth and lyrical flow that is enjoyable to read as well as to hear. The illustrations are soft, impressionistic paintings, full of pastel hues that are simultaneously calming and charming. The puppies in this story find themselves in all sorts of mischievous situations from “digging holes and making noise” to “running off with baby's toys” and are sure to bring a smile to any child or dog-lover's face.

Shea, Pegi Deitz. *Liberty Rising: The Story of the Statue of Liberty*. Illustrated by Wade Zahares. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN 0805072209. \$17.95. [44 p.]

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Statue of Liberty (New York, N.Y.)--Juvenile literature; Bartholdi, Frédéric Auguste, 1834-1904--Juvenile literature; New York (N.Y.)--Buildings, structures, etc.--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Liberty Rising tells the story of the Statue of Liberty which began as an idea in the mind of Frenchman, Edouard Laboulaye, and was brought to reality through the efforts of his friend, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi. Shea's text explains the complicated infrastructure design and construction stages of this colossal monument and conveys the excitement at its unveiling on October 28, 1886. Zahares' boldly colored pastel illustrations, most of which span one-and-a-half pages, compliment the text.

Other books may have more detailed information or actual photographs of the monument for older readers; this selection's coverage of this amazing building feat will catch the attention of preschoolers. Zahares' pastels are striking and the book concludes with an impressive double-page fold-out illustration of the entire monument. The pronunciation guide, chronology and "for further reading" sections at the end of the book are also helpful.

Balan, Bruce. *Cows Going Past*. Illustrated by Scott Nash. Dial, 2005. ISBN 0803729022. \$9.99. [32 p.]

Reviewer: Charity Martin-Reno

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Picture Books;

Subject: Cows--Juvenile fiction; Automobile travel--Juvenile fiction; Stories in rhyme; Books--Reviews;

Cows Going Past uses simple rhyming words (far/car, past/fast) in a story about what one can see out the window during a car ride. It brushes past a town, a tree, a barn, the sea, and describes most particularly cows, page after page. The illustrations are a little bit silly as they show the cows doing things that the text does not allude to at all. For example, the pictures show cows golfing in a field, fishing, playing in a rock band, and catching dragonflies at night, whereas, the text merely describes cows generally--their location in a field or at night, their color, and so on.

The text is in a large and simple font, easy to read. The story is pleasant and flows despite awkward pairings of text and illustration. It may be that children will find the pictures humorous regardless of the lack of support from the text.

Park, Linda Sue. *Bee-bim Bop!* Illustrated by Ho Baek Lee. Clarion, 2005. ISBN 0618265112. \$15.00. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic poetry;

Subject: Cookery, Korean--Juvenile fiction; Koreans--Juvenile fiction; Stories in rhyme; Books--Reviews;

Newberry Award winner Park collaborates with illustrator Lee for this yummy selection. *Bee-bim Bop!* is a delightful introduction into a Korean family's mealtime. Watercolor and pencil illustrations accompany the rhyming narrative. The story follows a little girl and her mother as they shop for, prepare, and finally eat bee-bim bop, a traditional Korean dish. The little girl excitedly follows her mother as they traverse the supermarket looking for the ingredients. At home, she does her best to help as she watches Mama prepare dinner. Full of anticipation, she sets the table and helps gather her Papa, grandmother, and baby brother for a family dinner. One thing is certain--this little girl loves her bee-bim bop!

Because the reader will be hungry after reading the story, Park thoughtfully includes a bee-bim bop recipe at the end, with simple directions for child and grown-up. Making the dish together like the family in the story is an excellent follow-up to the reading.

Kerrin, Jessica Scott. *Martin Bridge: Ready for Takeoff!* Illustrated by Joseph Kelly. Kids Can Press, 2005. ISBN 1553376889. \$14.95. 120 p.

Reviewer: Patricia Castelli

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture Book;

Subject: Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

This anthology is three stories within one cover, all featuring Martin. In the first story, *Riddles*, Martin is delighted by the riddles from the new bus driver, Jenny, who is substituting for grumpy Mr. Phips. How was Martin to know that the very day they surprise Jenny by decorating the bus, Mr. Phips is back--with surprising results? In the second story, Martin has lost his favorite toy, the "*Faster Blaster*." He explores problems with trust when parents lie to their children. In *Smithereens*, Martin deals with jealousy while making rockets for blast off with his scout troop. He's so used to being the center of attention for his artistic talent that he has a problem seeing his friend shine instead.

Thomson, Sarah L. *Amazing Sharks!* Harper Collins, 2005. ISBN 0060544570. \$16.89. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Informational;

Subject: An I Can Read Book; Sharks--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Close-up color photographs by the Wildlife Conservation Society and an interesting text introduce the beginning reader to the world of sharks: where they live, what they eat, the place they take in the food chain, and why they should be protected. More detailed information is given on five specific shark species. Though this book is informative, it would still engage a young reader.

However, the phonetic guides in parentheses following longer words may be confusing to such beginning readers. These few words could have been placed in a short glossary at the end of the book. In addition, this "I Can Read" series selection stated that "no one knows why" the hammerhead shark has one eye on each side of its rectangular head. Another picture book entitled *Sharks and Other Dangers of the Deep* explained that the hammerhead shark's uniquely shaped head allows it to "scan large area of the ocean for prey."

Greene, Stephanie. *Moose Crossing*. Illustrated by Joe Mathieu. Marshall Cavendish Children's Books, 2005. ISBN 0761452338. \$14.95. 56 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Animal stories; Humorous stories;

Subject: Moose--Juvenile fiction; Fame--Juvenile fiction;

Moose is enthralled when a sign that reads "Moose Crossing" is placed near his home. Fame seems finally to be within his grasp. His ego swells at the thought of a sign in his honor and he ends up in a fight with his best friend Hildy, a pig, who he assumes must be jealous. He soon finds, however, that celebrity status can grow tiresome, not to mention lonely. Moose eventually reconciles himself with Hildy and begins a series of attempts to disperse his increasing group of fans.

Akin to Judy Blume's *Freckle Juice*, this fast-paced novelette is perfect for a child just starting chapter books. Each chapter is only a few pages; the writing is straightforward and simple black-and-white illustrations break up the text. Children will enjoy the light, amusing tone and laugh at the behavior of this vain moose as he learns that celebrity status is not as desirable as it appears.

Collins, Suzanne. *When Charlie McButton Lost Power*. Illustrated by Mike Lester. Putnam's, 2005. ISBN 0399240004. \$15.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture Books;

Subject: Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Computer games--Juvenile fiction; Stories in rhyme; Books--Reviews;

When all the power in the house goes out, Charlie McButton is absolutely desperate for some kind of video game. He finds a little handheld game, but the battery is gone. His little sister's talking doll has a battery; Charlie takes it and earns a time-out. What follows is a timely story about siblings and how some types of fun are not battery-powered.

This rhyming story is set to lively, colorful illustrations. It is an easy tale for kids who grow up with technology-based entertainment to understand. While Collins does not seem to suggest that Charlie's video games are inherently bad, she does imply that other types of play, like with little sisters, are worthwhile--whether or not there's a power outage.

Parish, Herman. *Amelia Bedelia, Rocket Scientist?* Illustrated by Lynn Sweat. Greenwillow Books, 2005. ISBN 0060518871. \$16.89. 64 p.

Reviewer: Charity Martin-Reno

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction; Humorous stories;

Subject: Science projects--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

This delightful book is another of the well-known housekeeper Amelia Bedelia's crazy adventures. After being told to wash the glasses, Amelia puts Mr. Rogers' eye glasses in the dishwasher. Before he can explain his true instructions, she is off to the school science fair where she manages to make a mess of things by offending the science fair judge and pouring a full box of baking soda into one student's volcano, causing it to explode. In the end, she saves the day as usual with her quality baking. Mr. Rogers brings her forgotten lemon meringue pies to the school and they are chosen as the winner of the science fair--bringing her skills as a chemist to the forefront: "combine citric acid, H₂O, cornstarch, sucrose, and a pinch of sodium chloride... When the top turns brown, it's done."

Children will laugh and enjoy the play on words associated with Amelia Bedelia books. She takes the literal meaning of every word spoken out of any character's mouth. (Nobel Prize becomes "no bell" prize; "make-up" test for the children becomes a test in applying cosmetics). Pictures are bright and funny.

Apte, Sunita. *Christopher Reeve: don't lose hope!* Bearport Inc., 2006. ISBN 1597160741.
\$23.96. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Biography;

Subject: Reeve, Christopher, 1952--Juvenile literature; Quadriplegics--United states--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The subject of this Defining Moments Series title is the courage Christopher Reeve and his family displayed after a horse jumping accident resulted in Reeve becoming a quadriplegic. Apte, along with Leitch as consultant, covers Reeve's accident and his initial feelings of devastation. They tell about Reeve's formative years growing up in New York City, his first experiences with acting, and his becoming an international movie star from his lead role in the Superman movies. "You're still you. And I love you," Reeve's wife Dana explained after Reeve's accident. Reeve realized he really did want to live. His family helped him with the demands of physical therapy. He eventually gained feeling over 60% of his body, starred in a movie, directed a film, wrote his autobiography, established a foundation to raise money to find a cure for paralysis, and carried the Olympic torch for the December 2001 Olympics.

This Defining Moments Series title is informative, readable, and filled with colorful illustrations. An index, timeline, glossary, bibliography, and "read more" and "learn more online" sections at the back of the book are also great features of this biography. This book emphasizes the support family provides when an illness, accident, or other special challenge occur in one's life. Reeve's life is an inspiration to all people, not just those who are disabled. "Don't give up. Don't lose hope."

Hines, Anna Grossnickle. *Winter Lights: A Season in Poems and Quilts*. Illustrated by Anna Grossnickle Hines. Greenwillow, 2005. ISBN 0060008172. \$17.89. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture Books; Poetry;

Subject: Winter--Juvenile poetry; Children's poetry, American--Juvenile poetry; Books--Reviews

Mankind yearns for light and warmth during wintertime--decorations, songs, and even holidays celebrate light. *Winter Lights* portrays holidays in winter that use and celebrate light with unique illustrations. Each two-page spread illustration is a quilt, carefully sewn to depict images of fireplaces, candles, a Christmas tree, moonlight, lanterns, and even an aurora borealis. Alongside the picture is a short poem about the image. The last three pages of the book detail how the quilts were made and the inspiration for the images the quilts depict. Different quilting techniques are also described.

Hines is evenhanded in her attention to many different winter holidays, including Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, Solstice, Chinese New Year, and St. Lucia's Day. Other more universal winter scenes, such as moonlit snow are also shown. This book would be most interesting to a quilter, but because of its intricate illustrations and simple poems it will appeal to most readers. The author lists sources for the quilting techniques used and her website address at the book's end.

Wiles, Deborah. *Each Little Bird that Sings*. Harcourt Brace, 2005. ISBN 0152051139. \$16.00. 247 p.

Reviewer: Patricia Castelli

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Funeral homes--Juvenile fiction; Death--Juvenile fiction; Family life, Southern States--Juvenile fiction;

Comfort Snowberger lives in the family's funeral home with her parents, a dog named Dismay, and an elderly great aunt and uncle. When her great uncle dies peacefully, Comfort is furious with her young cousin Peach, a sniveling little boy who carries on in a manner most inappropriate for funerals. Now her beloved great aunt has died, and Comfort has to put up with Peach again.

This is a story with heart and humor, and also a heart-thumping disaster. Comfort has trouble with her former best friend Declaration and pressure from her parents to be Peach's friend. To the end she remains a sympathetic character with the courage to do what is right despite high personal costs.

Sage, Angie. *Magyk*. Illustrated by Mark Zug. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060577312. \$16.99. 564 p.

Reviewer: Patricia Castelli

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books--reviews;

The Heap family believes that their seventh son, Septimus, died shortly after birth. The same day, Septimus's father, Silas Heap, finds a newborn baby girl abandoned in the forest. He and his wife name her Jenna; they take her as their own after a warning from the Extraordinary Wizard that no one must know she was a foundling.

Because *Magyk* is only book one of the Septimus Heap trilogy, the reader will wonder about Septimus, the seventh son of the seventh son who is expected to have “magyk” powers. Half the fun is guessing who he might be. *Magyk* is an entertaining read with plenty of excitement and plenty of characters, some to love and others to hate.

Carman, Patrick. *The Dark Hills Divide*. Scholastic, 2005. ISBN 0439700930. \$11.95. 253 pp.

Reviewer: Patricia Castelli

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Not recommended

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Human-animal communication--Juvenile fiction; Forest animals--Juvenile fiction;

Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Alexa lives in a walled city, completely cut off from the outside world, until her discovery of the key to a secret passageway makes her desire to explore the outside world a possibility.

Although this popular book received primarily good editorial reviews, the setting is sloppy and the main character has such an inconsistent voice she seems to be too old or too young for her twelve years. Her diction is quaint or kid-next-door slang, depending on the page. The introduction of the fantasy element more than halfway through the book (Alexa's ability to talk to animals) introduces yet another world that chokes reason. The setting--a world of small cities totally isolated by tall walls--makes it clear to readers that there are no farms, no mines, no forestry and no trade with the outside world. How then do these people eat, drink wine, clothe themselves, have books, glass, metals, roaring fires and, of course, horses (what about waste removal?). This is a book where the author has given no thought to creating a world worthy of suspending a reader's disbelief.

Cleary, Brian P. *Rhyme & Punishment: Adventures in Wordplay*. Illustrated by J. P. Sandy. Millbrook Press, 2006. ISBN 1575058499. 15.95. 48 p.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: humorous poetry;

Subject: Puns and punning--Juvenile literature; Children's poetry, American--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Everyone has at some time groaned at an unexpected pun. Cleary's collection of light hearted rhymes is full of puns; some groaners, and others that merit a real chuckle. The book is divided in four sections easily distinguished by different colored background paper. All the puns in the first section involve musical terms. "My friend Ray borrows books to reed/ and balls to pitch and throw/ I keep good notes, and so fa re/ owes mi a la ti do." The punned words are printed in a font of a different color and weight from the rest of the text. Explanations of the musical terms appear in footnotes. The other sections which contain animal, food, and geography puns, are formatted the same way. The formatting and footnotes help young readers "get" even the more obscure puns. The illustrations also help illuminate the meanings. Sandy's humorous stylized cartoons incorporate both meanings of the puns. The illustration of the poem quoted above shows "Ray" standing on a pitcher's mound surrounded by both books and musical notes. Teachers could use this book as a fun way to introduce homonyms and build vocabulary. Children will enjoy reading it alone or sharing the "punny" rhymes with their friends.

Croggon, Alison. *The Naming*. Candlewick Press, 2005. ISBN 0763626392. \$17.99. 466 p.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Identity--Juvenile fiction; Orphans--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

This first book of a projected foursome is an excellent introduction to Maerad, Cadvan and their battle to save the land of Lirigon. In *The Naming*, orphaned Maerad is rescued from slavery by Cadvan, one of the bards of Lirigon. He recognizes Maerad's gift for magic and teaches her, as best he can, how to control it, but her powers are still wild and uncontained. Eventually Maerad comes to recognize her power, but is still not sure how to use it. Croggon ends the book with a cliffhanger: Maerad and Cadvan flee from the most powerful bard of Pellinor who has corrupted the school of the bards--a huge monster about to overtake them.

Croggon's unique heroine provides constant surprises. The plot is fast paced, the villains are exceedingly evil and the battle between good and bad is monumental.

Johnson, Angela. *Bird*. Dial, 2004. ISBN 0803728476. \$15.99. 144 pp.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Runaways--Juvenile fiction; Stepfathers--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Bird, a thirteen-year old girl from Cleveland, runs away from the wreckage her stepfather left when he walked out on her family without saying goodbye. From Ohio, she makes her way to the tiny town of Acorn, Alabama. There she lives by hiding out in a shed behind the home of a family whose faces she remembers from her stepfather's photographs. She knows he will come eventually, and when he does she will be waiting.

Ethan, living in the house with a shed out back, is struggling to adapt to life with a new heart and new prospects in life. He has a way of seeing what other people do not see and soon begins leaving food where he knows Bird will find it. Their tentative friendship opens the way to understanding themselves and the world better. Jay, a boy living in town, is still struggling with the death of his younger brother Derek. He can't bring himself to forgive the family--or the boy--who are the grateful recipients of Derek's heart. After encountering Bird on a roadside he feels an instant connection to this lonely girl who might understand what it feels like to lose someone.

Spare and sincere, the story is told through the interconnecting narratives of three voices. In each chapter we see the inner thoughts of these characters as they move, expand and occasionally overlap, bringing surprising and comforting results. Johnson, three-time winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, skillfully uses words and emotions to unfold this delicate novel. Although the conclusion is very open-ended, many valuable truths about human emotion and interaction are brought forward for consideration and examination.

Springer, Nancy. *The Case of the Missing Marquess*. Philomel, 2006. ISBN 0399243046.
\$10.99. 216 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Detective and mystery stories; Adventure stories;

Subject: London (England)--History--19th Century--Juvenile fiction; Holmes, Sherlock--
Juvenile fiction; Mothers--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Enola Holmes' mother disappears on Enola's fourteenth birthday, and although her mother has always behaved in a rather casual and distant manner towards her daughter, Enola loves her still and is desperate to make sure she has come to no harm. Consequently, she contacts her two much older brothers, Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes, who arrive at Ferndell Hall convinced that their mother has left of her own accord in an excess of flightiness. When Sherlock leaves for London, Mycroft makes plans to ship Enola off to boarding school. She sneaks out of the house and makes her way to London, becomes entangled in a case involving a missing heir; and also unravels the puzzle of her mother's disappearance.

Enola is a bright and endearing character, whose growing self-confidence and courage make her the perfect heroine for a young person's mystery. Springer, like Anne Perry, fills her narrative with Victorian customs and lore so integral to the story that the reader learns much without ever feeling lectured. Enola's adventures are fast-paced and suspenseful. The book seems to wrap up a bit briskly, but one still looks forward with much anticipation to Enola's future adventures.

Riordan, Rick. *The Sea of Monsters*. Miramax, 2006. ISBN 0786856866. \$17.95. 288 p.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories;

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

Perseus Jackson and friends take on a whole new batch of mythic monsters in the second volume of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series. The book begins fairly slowly as Percy tries to complete his final day of school without getting kicked out for a change. But when some unexpected visitors show up to Percy's P.E. class to play dodge ball with gigantic flaming metal orbs, Percy barely escapes with his life, and gets expelled for burning down the gymnasium. Things are no better when he gets to Camp Half-Blood, the summer school for demi-gods: someone has poisoned Thalia's tree so the camp is no longer immune from the monsters trying to kill the campers. Percy, Annabeth, and Percy's new friend and half-brother Tyson (a slow kid with only one eye--located in the middle of his forehead) set out for the Sea of Monsters (known to humans as The Bermuda Triangle) to retrieve the golden fleece, that could heal Thalia's tree, and to rescue their friend Grover the Satyr.

The Sea of Monsters starts out a bit more slowly than *The Lightning Thief* because of Tyson hulking about, but by and by, the pace picks up: Percy forgets what he's not supposed to do and chops off a Hydra's heads; Tyson buys powdered sugar treats from Monster Donuts--a franchise pops up every time someone chops up a Hydra (see above); a beautiful young woman named CC changes men into something a bit less smelly than pigs, and so on. Rick Riordan's series is the perfect combination of humor and adventure. It is a fabulous, painless tutorial on Greek mythology. Apparently Miramax's proofreader left town before finishing up the last two chapters, but other than that, *Sea of Monsters* is a pip.

Lenhard, Elizabeth. *Chicks with Sticks (It's a purl thing)*. Dutton Children's Books, 2005. ISBN 0525476229. \$15.99. 261 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Knitting--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Scottie feels distant and isolated from everyone - even her best friend Amanda - since her Aunt Roz passed away. Her artsy parents have no time for her, her best friend Amanda has moved on to more popular friends at Olivia Stark School, and Scottie doesn't know where she fits anymore. Looking for a yarn store in the hippy part of Chicago she discovers KnitWit, a funky store where people gather just to talk...and knit. In KnitWit, Scottie finds a new hobby, new (and old) friendships, and a new sense of belonging. But things change, and Scottie is afraid of losing everything Knit Wit has given her.

Lenhard writes a light and friendly teen read with knitting lingo woven throughout. While more mature readers might tire of the "teen" perspective and slang, the story's aim of finding a permanent place in a changing world is a theme that appeals to all ages. Each chapter is begun with a snippet from knitting patterns, like "Join Yarn" or "Add Fringe" and readers will even learn a bit about knitting figures like Elizabeth Zimmermann. For those who don't know stitch from purl, this book might be hard to understand, but it also can spark curiosity. For readers who want to try their hands at knitting, Lenhard includes some patterns and knitting-related crafts at the end of the book.

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*. Scholastic, 2005. ISBN 0439353793. \$19.95. 176 pp.

Reviewer: Pat Castelli

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: National socialism and youth--Juvenile literature; Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--

Germany--Juvenile literature; Jewish youth--Germany--History--20th century--Juvenile literature;

Books--Reviews;

Narrative and illustration work together to tell the stories of young people in Germany growing up in Hitler's shadow. While members of the Hitler Youth organizations make up most of the book, it also includes young Jewish people and young people who resisted Hitler, who were sometimes executed for their activities. Bartoletti's powerful and moving book emphasizes the power young people can have for good or ill. She concludes with questions for the reader to ponder about whether or not the horror summarized in the book could be repeated at some future time.

The book includes source notes, a bibliography and an index. It won a 2006 Newbery Honor and the 2006 Sibert Award for the best work on nonfiction for young people.

Denenberg, Barry. *Shadow Life: A Portrait of Anne Frank and Her Family*. Scholastic Press, 2005. ISBN 0439416787. \$16.95. 224 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Biographies;

Subject: Frank, Anne, 1929-1945--Family--Juvenile literature; Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Netherlands--Amsterdam--Biography--Juvenile literature; Frank, Margot--Diaries--Juvenile literature;

Millions have read *The Diary of Anne Frank* and have been inspired and touched by the words of an ordinary Jewish girl living during an extraordinary time. In *Shadow Life*, Denenberg presents the story of the Frank family before, during, and after their time in the "Secret Annexe" where they spent much of World War II. Denenberg divides their experience into four main sections: (1) living, (2) hiding, (3) dying, and (4) surviving. The first, third, and fourth sections serve as a narrative of the Franks' lives before and after their years in hiding; the second section is a recreation of what Margot Frank's diary may have been like as she lived side-by-side her more famous and forthright sister and the other inhabitants of the secret apartment behind Otto Frank's former workplace.

For those who are interested in the process, Denenberg writes a brief introduction which details his extensive research and explains how he chose to organize the Franks' story. He bases his writings off of Anne's diary as well as many other accounts and resources (as evidenced by his long bibliography). A chronology of the Frank family is also included. The tale of the Otto Frank family comes across clearly in Denenberg's writing; readers can see the strengths and failings of the Franks and their friends in a very holistic way. The writing is simple and the story is moving because it is real. *Shadow Life* is an inspirational story that will work wonderfully as a companion book to *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, though it is equally worthy to read on its own.

Spiegler, Louise. *The Amethyst Road*. Clarion Books, 2005. ISBN 0618485724. \$16.00. 328 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Adventure Stories; Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Self Realization--Juvenile fiction; Prejudices--Juvenile fiction;

Sixteen-year old Serena lives in the Paria enclave, but she is "ma-hane" (shunned by everyone) because of her sister Willow's out of wedlock pregnancy. Serena is half Yulang and half Gorgio and accepted by neither; her father died accidentally in the army; her mother mysteriously left 3 years ago; her sister Willow lives a carefree dating life despite the fact that she should care for Zara, her 3 year-old daughter, birthed out-of-wedlock. Although she feels angry and caged-in by these many inhibiting factors, Serena loves Zara. When the Gorgio social services forcefully take Zara from Willow, Serena begins a quest to find her mother who could be a legal guardian and qualify to get Zara back. Serena desires to establish a stable growing up environment for her niece, finish school, and make a future for herself. Amethyst gemstones, which Serena finds in a deep cave in the mountains, turn out to be the means by which she and her friend Shem help themselves and begin to help dispel discrimination against the Yulang people. Together Serena and Shem meet delays, intolerance, and hatred. Through their adventures, Serena comes to understand herself better and eventually discovers the reason for her mother's mysterious departure.

Although most people still drive cars or trailers, the culture portrayed in this book is difficult to grasp, and the reader must piece facts about the culture bit by bit as they read. The author's note explains that Spiegler is interested in the fantasy Rom or Gypsy culture, a strict caste society. A note at the beginning of the book about this culture would have been helpful. Serena is an example of stick-to-it-iveness, but she is constantly jumping to conclusion and she struggles with a very short temper. Other themes include racism, resistance to bad treatment, speaking out and standup up for oneself, and self-realization. Readers who like romance along with adventure will be rooting for Serena and Shem to sort out their differences.

Vande Velde, Vivian. *The Book of Mordred*. Illustrated by Justin Gerard. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. ISBN 061850754X. \$18.00. 342 p.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Mordred (Legendary character)--Juvenile fiction; Arthur, King--Juvenile fiction; Great Britain--History--To 1066--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Arthurian legend has offered inspiration to generations of writers. Recently we have seen the villain of the story, Mordred, take on a leading role. Novels such as Nancy Springer's "I Am Mordred," Sarah Thomson's "The Dragon's Son" and Elizabeth Wein's "The Winter Prince" tell his story. Now added to this lofty canon is "The Book of Mordred" by Vivian Vande Velde. Far from rehashing stale territory, Vande Velde offers significant insight. The story is told from the perspective of three women who are part of Mordred's life. Mordred becomes more of a minor character as focus is given to the perspectives of Lady Alayna, the sorceress Nimue, and Kiera, Alayna's young daughter. Through the women's eyes we gain deeper insight into Mordred's psyche. In this way the reader can begin to see him as a character that deserves sympathy rather than a mere villain.

The book chronicles various events over a ten year period, finally ending with the deaths of Mordred and Arthur; the characters impact one another's lives in an action packed plot with vivid words that bring the familiar setting to life. Despite weighty themes such as love, loyalty, chivalry, family, destiny, evil, and death, the story is never overwhelmed by them: readers who have yet to be fully introduced to Mordred will find this novel, with its concluding comprehensive outline of the whole legend, very accessible. Even those more familiar with Arthurian tales will find the novel rich and interesting. Breathing new life into an old legend, Vande Velde's retelling provides excellent reading for fantasy and historical fiction fans.

Giblin, James Cross. *Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth*. Clarion Books, 2005. ISBN 0618096426. \$22.00. 244 p.

Reviewer: Janet O. Francis

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational

Subject: Booth, John Wilkes, 1838-1865--Juvenile literature; Booth, Edwin, 1833-1893--Juvenile literature; Lincoln, Abraham, 11809-1865-Assassination--juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

There have been theatre dynasties in many families, but none have cut quite the swath in American history made by Junius Booth and two of his ten children. Edwin, the older of the two became a famous and revered actor, established the famous Boston Players Club, built and lost a theater, and earned enough money during his sixty years to provide an unusually comfortable lifestyle--when he was working. John Wilkes Booth, the favorite of his parents, became a hiss and a byword among the community for his determined hatred of the North and the anti-slavery administration of Abraham Lincoln. The upshot of his hatred was his assassination of Lincoln at the Ford theatre and his subsequent death. Although his family had not shared his penchant for the South, they all suffered its consequences. The theatre where Edwin was performing was closed the next day and he was not able to appear safely in public for more than a year.

The text is well documented and abundantly illustrated with photographs from the Harvard Theatre Collection; the historical account is brought to life through firsthand accounts of family members. Francis' writing style is engaging and readable, retaining the essence of masterful storytelling while providing an excellent historical and familial background for one of America's most notorious characters.

Funke, Cornelia Caroline. *Inkspell*. Scholastic, 2005. ISBN 0439554004. \$19.99. 635 p.

Reviewer: Patricia Castelli

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Children's stories, German--Translations into English; Books and reading--Juvenile fiction;

Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Although this sequel to *Inkheart* received excellent editorial reviews, it suffers drastically as too many plot threads are left dangling until the next installment. Long before the non-ending, the plot threads begin to unravel. Characters become less sympathetic as they journey along, fumbling from one disaster to another. Every one of them is inept. Meggie should work her magic to repair the world, but she never quite gets to it. Her aunt is a prisoner in her own house, held by a couple of buffoons whose motivations become murky after their boss disappears into Inkworld. Scene after scene, characters are mired in threatening circumstances, largely because of their lack of positive action.

Cordsen, Carol Foskett. *The Milkman*. Illustrated by Jones, Douglas B.. Dutton, 2005. ISBN 0525472088. \$15.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture Books; Poetry;

Subject: Delivery of goods--Juvenile fiction; Milk--Juvenile fiction; Dairy products--Juvenile fiction;

When Caroline cannot find her dog, all seems lost. But for Mr. Plimpton, the friendly neighborhood milkman, finding lost dogs is all part of the routine. As Mr. Plimpton makes his morning rounds, we see Caroline's signs all over town: "Lost my dog. Love, Caroline." Observant young readers will enjoy helping Mr. Plimpton find Caroline's dog--they might even spot him before Mr. Plimpton!

This simple, yet charming tale is told in verse. Cordsen commands a strong rhythmic quality that keeps the story moving. Her writing stays descriptive; no words are wasted. The reader is left with a vivid picture that is well-matched with Jones's inviting illustrations, reminiscent of Norman Rockwell's era. *The Milkman* deserves a strong recommendation for young and old readers.

Grey, Mini. *Traction Man is Here!* Illustrated by Mini Grey. Knopf, 2005. ISBN 0375831916. \$15.95.
[32 p.]

Reviewer: Pat Castelli

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture books; Humorous stories; Adventure stories;

Subject: Toys--Juvenile fiction; Brooms and brushes--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Traction Man is a hero. While wearing his deep-sea diving suit, he braves the frightful underwater world of the kitchen sink filled with dirty dishes and worse. In battle dress, he rescues dolls from the garden. But soon his courage is sorely tested. What is this new outfit Grandma knitted for him? A green romper with a matching bonnet! How can a super hero wear such a thing? Much of the humor in this delightful picture book is in the illustration. Adults will like it as well as kids.

James, Simon. *Baby Brains Superstar*. Illustrated by Simon James. Candlewick Press, 2005. ISBN 0763628948. \$15.99. [32 p.]

Reviewer: Charity Martin-Reno

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture book;

Subject: Babies--Juvenile fiction; Musicians--Juvenile fiction; Rock music--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The second book about the clever Baby Brains, *Baby Brains Superstar* continues in the tradition of silly, yet delightful, humor. Baby Brains masters the timpani, tuba, cello and electric guitar, allowing him to make his debut as a rock star before most children can walk. In the end he trades stardom for the comforts of home and mommy.

Zane, Alexander. *The Wheels on the Race Car*. Illustrated by James Warhola. Orchard Books, 2005. ISBN 0439590809. \$14.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous poetry;

Subject: Automobile racing--Juvenile Fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

"Racers... start your engines!!" This fun-filled take on the familiar song "The Wheels on the Bus" is sure to please children of all ages. The charming front cover is just a sneak preview to the comical animal race car drivers introduced in the book. These include Penguin, driving the Pengoil Igloo #44, Hippo, driving the Dippo Donuts #5, Moose, driving the Northwinds Hairgel #88, and Rhino, driving the Rhino Battery Charger #35, to name but a few. Each verse describes some aspect of the racing environment, from the sound of the engine, refueling and pit stop action, to the checkered winning flag. Each verse has appropriate sound effects to go along with the lyrics. "The wheels on the race car go ROUND and ROUND, all around the track." Inside the front and back covers are illustrations of Hot Rod Dog's hand actions for each verse.

Warhola's colorful and very detailed illustrations make this picture book a thorough success. By positioning the verses in the NASCAR racing scene and keeping the illustrations very true to life, he has created a delightful picture book that will be enjoyed by preschoolers as well as anyone willing to read it to the younger set.