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Full Issue

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Lloyd-Jones, Sally. *Little One, We Knew You'd Come*. Illustrated by Jackie Morris. Little, Brown, 2006. ISBN 0316523917. \$16.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Christmas poetry;

Subject: Jesus Christ--Nativity--Juvenile poetry; Books--Reviews;

The sweet anticipation of the birth of the Christ Child by Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds, and wise men is captured in gentle verse:

People were sleeping. We didn't care.
Good news, we sang, our baby is here!
Our baby has come, our darling one. . .

Deft illustrations, done in watercolor and gold leaf, have an ethereal renaissance-like quality. Many are adorned or bordered with stars, flowers, butterflies, and feathers. The illustrator captures the tender joy of new life and the promise of a Messiah. Use this book to welcome a new baby into the family or to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Frazier, Craig. *Stanley Goes Fishing*. Illustrated by Frazier, Craig. Chronicle Books, 2006. ISBN 081185244X. \$15.95. 40 p.

Reviewer: Mary Chapman

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture Books;

Subject: Fishing--Juvenile fiction; Fish--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Stanley goes on a fishing trip and finds that the fish aren't biting; so, he comes up with a clever solution to catch bucket-loads of fish.

Frazier's almost surreal illustrations are delightful. The clean lines and the blues, greens, oranges and golds combine to produce eye-pleasing artwork of Stanley and his fishing excursion. The simple story has a quirky ending that might confuse some children and spark the imagination of others.

Lee, Marlene. *The Hero in My Pocket*. Illustrated by children. Early Light Press, LLC, 2005. ISBN 1419601520. \$15.95. 36 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: N/A;

Subject: Bereavement in children--Juvenile literature; Children and death--Juvenile literature; Military service--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Through a combination of a fictional story and activity pages, this blended book attempts to help children who have lost a love one serving in the military. In a composite story of bereavement, two children, Greg, age 10, and Grace, age 7, struggle with the grief, anger, and life changes that accompany the death of their Special Hero, their father. Written with sensitivity and realism, chapters deal with aspects of grief and healing. Each chapter ends with an invitation from Greg and Grace for readers to remember their own special heroes.

Author Lee was a Red Cross volunteer who worked with military families awaiting the arrival of wounded and dying soldiers. Her experiences led her to graduate studies in thanatology (the study of death, dying and bereavement) and the writing of this book. The "Note to Adult Caregivers" indicates that the goal of the book "is to facilitate understanding, communication, and interaction with a child following the death" of a special hero. The random illustrations, which are done by children, encourage the reader to add his own art and words to this book intended for individual use. Even though the book is consumable, public and school libraries and school counselors should consider making this book available for the young people they serve.

Howe, James. *Houndsley and Catina and the Birthday Surprise*. Illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay. Candlewick, 2006. ISBN 0763624055. \$14.99. 48 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Animal stories;

Subject: Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Birthdays--Juvenile fiction; Parties--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

Houndsley is a sad canine--he doesn't know when his birthday is. As he and his feline friend Catina walk in the rain, Catina becomes sad when she realizes that she doesn't know her birthday either. Unaware of the other's plan, they each determine to cheer up the other one. Houndsley bakes a beautiful cake. Catina knits a sweater. Both plan surprise parties. The surprised and happy friends decide to share their birthday celebration every year.

The sequel to *Houndsley and Catina*, this three-chapter beginning reader would make an enjoyable birthday gift to read again and again. Watercolor, pencil, and collage illustrations capture the moods of the characters and add to the festive celebration. A useful addition to school and public libraries.

Brisson, Pat. *I Remember Miss Perry*. Illustrated by Stephane Jorisch. Dial, 2006. ISBN 0803729812. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Teachers--Juvenile fiction; Death--Juvenile fiction; Grief--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Stevie is afraid of starting a new school, but his teacher, Miss Perry, whose eyes almost disappear when she smiles, is empathic. Her fondest wish, to have Stevie join her for lunch, makes his stomachache go away. Everyday Miss Perry has a new "fondest wish" for her class until one morning when she does not come to school and the principal substitutes. After lunch, the students return to the classroom to find many parents. The principal then tells them that Miss Perry has died in an automobile accident. The children cry and ask questions. During the grieving process the following day, the principal and school counselor help the children to remember Miss Perry and to tell stories about their happy teacher. The counselor asks the children what would be Miss Perry's fondest wish today and they reply with a variety of positive wishes.

Expressive ink-and-watercolor illustrations capture a charismatic teacher, her multicultural students, and their range of emotions from happiness to grief. This poignant story deals with the sadness of loss and the power of memories to help happiness return. The book fills a gap in many public and school library collections. Because it could be used with elementary classes who are experiencing a tragic death, school counselors may also wish to add it to their collections.

Elya, Susan Middleton. *F is for Fiesta*. Illustrated by G. Brian Karas. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2006. ISBN 0399242252. \$11.99. 32p.

Reviewer: Selma Alexandre

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Poetry; Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Spanish language--Juvenile fiction; Birthdays--Juvenile fiction; Stories in rhyme--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

A lively alphabet picture book, *F is for Fiesta*, tells the story of a young boy's exuberant birthday celebration.

Representing each letter of the alphabet, Spanish words are cleverly inserted into poetic, rhythmic English sentences. A pronunciation guide and a discussion of the Spanish alphabet, make this book a good choice for second language learners, grades 2 and younger.

Karas's richly colored illustrations set the celebratory mood. From beginning to end, festive decorations, salsa music, special treats, and exotic gifts add a taste of Spanish fiesta to the reading experience. Everyone has a grand time at the birthday fiesta.

Murphy, Pat, Ellen Macaulay, and the staff of the Exploratorium. *Exploratopia*. Illustrated by Gorski, Jason. Little, Brown, 2006. ISBN 0316612812. \$29.99. 384 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Science--Methodology--Juvenile literature; Science--Experiments--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Murphy and the staff of San Francisco's Exploratorium have compiled more than 400 kid-friendly experiments and explorations for curious young minds. Organized in three parts (Exploring Yourself, Exploring Interesting Places, and Exploring Interesting Stuff), activities include material lists (Here's What You Need), instructions (Here's What You Do), and explanations (What's Going On?). From amusement parks to eyes to music to money, most kids will find something that will spark their interests and engage their brains and senses.

Simple illustrations and color photographs enhance instructions and explanations. An index allows readers to quickly locate activities, but many young readers will enjoy browsing this book. A first priority choice for school, public, and home libraries. Elementary science teachers will find dozens of ways to enliven the science curriculum.

Nikola-Lisa, W. *How We Are Smart*. Illustrated by Sean Qualls. Lee & Low, 2006. ISBN 1584302542. \$16.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture books; Biographies; Poetry;

Subject: Multiple intelligences--Juvenile poetry; Biography--Juvenile poetry; Intellect--Juvenile poetry; Books--Reviews;

Everyone has a different way of learning, understanding, and being smart. *How We Are Smart* looks at twelve famous, successful people and their areas of excellence. The book examines eight types of intelligence or ways of being "smart": body smart, logic smart, nature smart, people smart, picture smart, self smart, and word smart. The culturally diverse people profiled include civic leaders, artists, poets, and scientists.

This book is a straightforward approach to the growing idea of different intelligences and paraphrases Howard Gardener's eight intelligences theory. Each individual's entry begins with a quote by the individual, a short rhyming poem, and then a brief biography paragraph; all of this is opposite a page with an illustration of the individual. The book ends with an outline of the eight intelligences covered in the book, activities, further reading, and resources for caregivers and educators. Adults should read this with children, as some of the words and concepts are challenging.

Reynolds, Susan. *The First Marathon: The Legend of Pheidippides*. Illustrated by Daniel Minter. Albert Whitman, 2006. ISBN 0807508675. \$16.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, All

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Picture books; Informational books; Folklore;

Subject: Marathon, Battle of, Greece, 490 B.C.--Juvenile literature; Pheidippides, fl. 490 B.C.--Juvenile literature; Marathon running--History--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The legend of the first marathon comes alive in Reynolds's retelling. This ancient piece of folklore explains how marathons came to be. During a Persian invasion, the running talents of Pheidippides, a young soldier, prove valuable to the Athenians. The Athenian army, vastly outnumbered by the Persians, sends Pheidippides as a messenger to Sparta with a plea for reinforcements. According to legend, Pheidippides made the 140 mile trip in a thirty-six hour run. Then he ran back to join his fellow soldiers. After a ferocious battle, he made a last run from the battlegrounds at Marathon to Athens to announce victory. The text then turns to the present, relating the story to the mass long-distance race it is today.

Reynolds's narrative is lively, if a little contrived in flow and word choice. The bibliography and historical notes in the back of the book add to its value. Minter's flat, 2-D, illustrations, with their geometric borders, breathe Greco-Roman. The colors are bright and alluring.

The First Marathon is a great book for would-be marathoners or anyone interested in ancient Grecian legends. Children and adults alike will enjoy the legend behind the race. It makes a good choice for school and home libraries.

Potter, Ellen. *Pish Posh*. Philomel Books, 2006. ISBN 0399239952. \$15.99. 166 p.

Reviewer: Mary Chapman

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Detective and Mystery Stories; Fantasy Fiction; Humorous Stories;

Subject: Restaurants--Juvenile fiction; Snobs and Snobbishness--Juvenile fiction; New York (N.Y.)--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Snobbish, wealthy 11-year-old Clara Frankofile has everything, including her own New York penthouse apartment with its own treehouse, rollercoaster, and beach! Her parents are the owners of the Pish Posh restaurant - the most fashionable restaurant in New York City. Clara has a knack for determining who is a Somebody and who is a Nobody, and it's her job to keep the Nobodies out of the Pish Posh. One night Clara observes that Dr. Piff, a Pish Posh regular, has become a Nobody and tells him to leave the restaurant. Before he goes, Dr. Piff confronts Clara to inform her that she isn't as observant as she thinks and that there is a mystery at the Pish Posh that she is completely overlooking. This revelation sets Clara on the road of discovery about herself and her family as well about what is happening under her nose at the Pish Posh.

Some might think Potter's story is a bit over the top and unbelievable, but I found it clever and imaginative as well as humorous. There are some poignant moments in the story where Clara learns about the importance of human relations and the dangers of hasty judgments. The novel also comments on our society's crazy pursuit for popularity and our worship of those who achieve some level of fame and celebrity.

Lowry, Lois. *Gossamer*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0618685502. \$16.00. 140 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Dreams--Juvenile fiction; Nightmares--Juvenile fiction; Child abuse--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

Littlest One is a young and delicate dream-giver-in-training. Thin Elderly is her superior and trainer. Together, they battle the evil sensistees, who work to destroy the happiness of the two humans in their care--a lonely, old woman and a troubled, young boy. The dream-givers gather the happiest memories they can forage and bestow them in the form of pleasant dreams. These efforts strengthen their charges against the nightmares inflicted by the sensistees.

Lowry's unique style is evident in *Gossamer*. Through this enchanting tale, she introduces readers to the mystical world of dream-givers and sensistees and suggests that the realm of the unconscious is more closely intertwined with the real world than is apparent. Her approach is detailed and gripping as it forces the reader to keep track of the various storylines in the book to make connections between them. Yet, at the same time, readers may feel distanced from the story, by the remote, omniscient narrator tone. Many characters are left without name and Lowry picks and chooses the details she wants to emphasize. This technique is reminiscent of her award-winning novel, *The Giver*.

Gossamer is a quick read. Fantasy lovers should grab a copy. In addition, this novel broaches important issues about interpersonal relations. It touches on topics such as domestic abuse and divorce and allows readers to contemplate the effects of these travesties on parents and children. The book also illustrates that people can find fulfillment through service and that healing and hope can come, even to those who have been badly hurt.

Paterson, Katherine. *Bread and Roses, Too*. Clarion, 2006. ISBN 0618654798. \$16.00. 275 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Labor unions--Juvenile fiction; Strikes and lockouts--Textile workers--Juvenile fiction; Immigrants--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Newberry Award winner, Paterson is up to her usual standard in *Bread and Roses, Too*. This novel centers on a young Italian girl and an American boy who become entangled in the events of the "Bread and Roses" strike of Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Rosa and her immigrant family live in Lawrence. Rosa's mother and older sister work at the wool mill; her father recently killed in a mill accident. Young Jack Beale also works at the mill to support himself and his abusive, alcoholic father. When factory owner, Billy Wood, lowers the already low wages, his workers have had it--they can barely make ends meet as it is! A strike is organized and both Jack and Rosa's family join in.

Soon, the town is in chaos and Rosa is filled with inner turmoil--confused and worried for her family. What if her sister and mother get hurt in the strike? What will happen to her and baby Ricci? Eventually, as the town gets more violent, the strike organizers arrange for children to be sent to homes in outlying cities for safety. Both Rosa and Jack end up on a train to Barre, Vermont, where they learn lessons of love, trust, and kindness.

Bread and Roses, Too closely follows the history of the 1912 Lawrence strike and the role the people of Barre, Vermont played in helping the strikers. It is a wonderful addition to any elementary or middle school collection. It works perfectly as a curricular tie-in between social studies and literature. Readers will enjoy experiencing this time period along with the characters.

Buckley, Susan and Elspeth Leacock. *Journeys For Freedom: A New Look at America's Story*. Illustrated by Rodica Prato. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0618223231. \$17.00. 48 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational Books; Biographies;

Subject: Liberty--History--Anecdotes--Juvenile literature; United States--Biography--Anecdotes--Juvenile literature; United States--History--Maps for Children--Juvenile; Books--Reviews;

Buckley and Leacock share twenty stories of struggles for freedom--some successful, some not. And though the title proclaims these struggles are part of America's story, there are many stories that are only peripherally "American." This is not a failing, as it makes the book more inclusive for readers from all backgrounds.

From Deborah Sampson, who dressed up as a boy to fight in the Revolutionary War, to Isi Veleris, who survived the holocaust, this book is full of stories of courage, strength and vision.

Numbers in the text correspond to places on the Prato's illustrations and maps and help readers follow the physical journeys of the stories.

This book is an excellent addition to a classroom or home library, especially for those who wish to teach their children early on the price and value of freedom.

Adkins, Jan. *What if you met a knight?* Illustrated by Jan Adkins. Roaring Brook Press, 2006. ISBN 1596431482. \$16.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Reynolds, Kate

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books; Picture books;

Subject: Knights and knighthood--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Adkins has produced a second informative and funny historical view of a romanticized group. His first book in this vein focused on pirates and this one focuses on knights. He disabuses notions of chivalry and perfection in knights of the Middle Ages in favor of a more realistic look at life in medieval times and the place of knights. His narrative is informal but crammed full of useful, interesting information.

He describes life in the Middle Ages using Sir Guy of Wareham as his subject, talking about his duties as farmer, merchant, judge, banker, investor, planner and more--taking the mythology out and providing the truth. Concise and informative, this book is a good addition for a classroom collection on the Middle Ages and a must have in an elementary library.

Shyamalan, M. Night. *Lady in the Water: A Bedtime Story*. Illustrated by Crash McCreery. Little, Brown, 2006. ISBN 0316017345. \$17.99. 64 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Imaginary creatures--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Director Shyamalan tries his hand at creating a children's book, but the result seems little more than an advertising ploy to entice readers to view the film of the same name. While McCreery's dark and moody artwork is gorgeous (it would be interesting to see him doing further work in children's books), *Lady in the Water: A Bedtime Story* has no plot--only vague descriptions of the nature and function of Shyamalan's fantasy creatures. Filled with more white space than anything else, the book seems an attempt to evoke tension and mystery but only comes off as insubstantial and empty.

On the other hand, the book does produce a kind of morbid curiosity in the movie. So perhaps it succeeds after all.

Bondoux, Anne-Laure. *The Princetta*. Bloomsbury, 2006. ISBN 158234924X. \$17.95. 500 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Adventure stories; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Adventure and adventurers--Juvenile fiction; Voyages and travels--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Princetta Malva of the Kingdom of Galnicia is mortified--her father reads her personal diaries and notebooks aloud in front of the councilors and forces her to burn them. She is also about to be married off to a foreign prince whom she's never met. Raised by her tutor on stories of adventure and magic, Malva is not about to accept her situation--along with her handmaiden Philomena, she plans an escape. But as she begins experiencing real adventures and life-or-death choices, Malva discovers the world is not mythological at all, but full of beauty, pain, betrayal, and friendship.

This adventure was clearly intended to be an epic--the story sweeps across large amounts of time and great distances and the characters encounter frequent and varied dangers. But Bondoux tends to tell rather than show readers how the characters are changing. The book has a Sinbad-like style: it is plot-driven; adventures come fast and furious with minimal character development. That might have made it a good bedtime text, if not for the complete let-down in the ending. Readers should bear in mind that the story may have lost some cultural and language aspects when it was translated from French to English, but the overall effect feels stilted and contrived.

Lockhart, E. *The Boyfriend List: (15 guys, 11 shrink appointments, 4 ceramic frogs, and me, Ruby Oliver)*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2005. ISBN 0385732066. \$15.95. 240 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Dating (Social customs)--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; High school--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Fifteen year old Ruby "Roo" Oliver is having panic attacks after a series of social debacles and humiliations. She is seeing a psychiatrist at her parents' promptings. Roo's road to self-discovery is mapped through a psychiatrist-requested, self-created list of 15 guys who have been unofficial and official boyfriends. Motivated by sessions with her shrink, Roo recounts the insecurities and irritations of her sophomore existence. She comes to the realization that she is not honest in her relationships and that she is much like her self-absorbed mother.

The stream-of-consciousness narrative is arranged by chapters that bear a boyfriend's name, although most of the text is about Roo and her feelings and not about the boys. The main character consistently portrays overpowering teen angst that can come of every source--appearances, friends, non-friends, parents, flowers, and foibles real and imagined. The other characters are not well developed and serve almost as props for Roo's beleaguered life. Roo's growth is marginal and the conclusion seems rushed. The first person narration is expounded through explanatory footnotes, which are off-putting, and sexually-charged situations are frankly discussed. Definitely a chick book.

Morgan, Matthew and Samantha Barnes. *Children's Miscellany Too: more useless information that's essential to know*. Illustrated by Niki Catlow. Chronicle Books, 2006. ISBN 0811856399 \$12.95. 128 p.

Reviewer: Reynolds, Kate

Reading Level: All

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational Books;

Subject: Curiosities and wonders--Juvenile literature; Handbooks, vade-mecums, etc.--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Morgan and Barnes have put together a hilarious compendium of truly miscellaneous facts, lists, guides, ideas, and instructions. From the bizarre (what to do if zombies attack) to the useful (how to turn your watch into a compass), this collection will no doubt provide readers with information they did not know before. Trivia buffs will greatly enjoy this volume, as will children and adults who like a good laugh. The book can be read straight through or by opening at any spot and reading what is there.

Perhaps the only failing of this book is that the note in which the authors "ask the reader to use common sense to distinguish humor from real advice" needs to be in a more prominent location.

Robbins, Ken. *Pumpkins*. Roaring Brook Press, 2006. ISBN 1596431849. \$14.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: All

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture books; Informational books;

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

Pumpkins might seem to be everywhere in the fall, but they begin in the spring as seeds. They're used as jack-o'-lanterns, pies, or just plain old pumpkins. And in the end, the seeds can be saved and planted when spring comes again.

Pumpkins is a photographic gem, but it is not a traditional story picture book. It isn't exactly a detailed non-fiction book about pumpkins, either. The text is almost lyrical at points, the photos simple and beautiful in their composition. The variety of images depicts pumpkins at the seed, vine, flower, and fruit stages, the end use as jack-o'-lanterns and pie, and back to seeds again. This book is a good beginning reader and instructional story because the words are challenging but not too complex.