



2009

# Full Issue

Children's Book Review

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Hotchner, Steve and Kathy. *The Dinosaur Play*. Dramatic Publishing Company, 2007. ISBN 1583425349. \$5.50 script; \$35/performance fee. 28 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Plays; Adventure plays; Historical plays;

Subject: Dinosaurs--Juvenile drama; Prehistoric time--Juvenile drama; Children's plays; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Working together makes things happen

Production Requirements: Bare stage with props, fog machine and lighting

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 minutes

Characters: 5

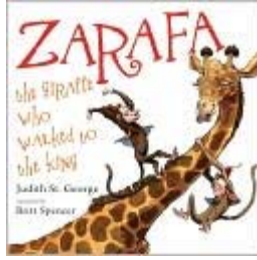
Cast: 5 actors, at least 2 male & 2 female

Time Period: Prehistoric

The play begins with a large egg on the stage, along with a human who tells us that he has traveled back in time; he is covered in fur and is one of the first mammals. The egg is a dinosaur egg. Eventually, a Triceratops and Brontosaurus arrive and with the help of children in the audience, the dinosaurs help the egg to hatch. The egg contains a baby Triceratops, and it is decided that the Brontosaurus will be its mother and the Triceratops its father. With more help from the audience, the dinosaurs teach the baby to walk, escape a Tyrannosaurus rex, and find a new swamp-home for the family. The actor playing the mammal goes back to the future and becomes a human again.

As stated in the title, this is a participation play for children. Children are constantly brought up from the audience to help or asked to do things while sitting in the audience. The actors speak directly to the audience almost constantly. Young children will enjoy helping to move the action along. The writing seems improvisational, as though actors created the play and then someone wrote it down. Although young children would doubtless enjoy the production, it lacks the plot structure needed to engage an older audience.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)



St. George, Judith. *Zarafa: The Giraffe Who Walked to the King*. Illustrated by Britt Spencer. Philomel, 2009. ISBN 9780399250491. \$16.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Meriam Bates

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

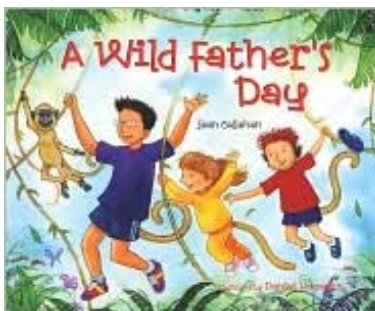
Genre: Historical fiction; Biographies; Adventure stories;

Subject: Giraffe--Egypt--Biography--Juvenile literature; France--Kings and rulers--History--19th century--Juvenile literature; Diplomatic gifts--History--19th century--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Zarafa means charming or lovely one in Arabic. It was also the name of a giraffe who was a present from the king of Egypt to the king of France. In order to get from Egypt to France, Zarafa had to travel on camels, boats, and even walk the last five hundred miles of the journey. Throughout it Zarafa was sweet and good tempered and everyone loved her, especially the King of France. French citizens came to visit her by the thousands at the zoo in Paris until her death in 1845.

St. George brings the true story of Zarafa to life in this readable, brightly illustrated picture book. She stays true to the facts of the real life story, but at the same time brings it to a fun and interesting level for young readers. Spencer's watercolor, gouache and ink illustrations are lively and bright. He uses bright colors for the African scenes and more subdued ones for the European scenes, symbolizing the distance that Zarafa travels as well as helping the reader to understand how different and exciting Zarafa must have appeared to the French people who had never seen anything like her.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)



Callahan, Sean. *A Wild Father's Day*. Illustrated by Daniel Howarth. Albert Whitman, 2009. ISBN 9780807522936. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Meriam Bates

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

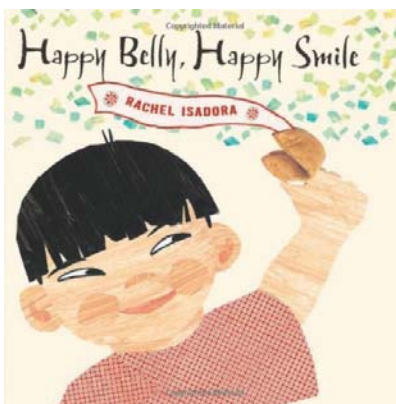
Genre: Picture books; Fiction;

Subject: Father's Day--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Early one Father's Day, two children give their dad a card that says, "Have a WILD Father's Day." They decide that the best way to have a wild Father's Day is to act like animals, so they spend the rest of the day playing, exercising, and eating like animals. They hop like kangaroos, stretch like cats, run like cheetahs, swing like monkeys, swim like dolphins, eat like elephants, and sleep like puppies. At the end of the day, the father tucks the children in and tells them, "I love you like only a daddy can."

Though the text is rather thin, the playful colored pencil and watercolor illustrations make up for it by creatively depicting the group, both as people and as animals. The bright colors and sparse text make this an excellent book for very young children. As well as following along with the pictures, young children and their parents may also enjoy joining in the fun and pretending to be animals for a day too.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)



Isadora, Rachel. *Happy Belly, Happy Smile*. Illustrated by Rachel Isadora. Harcourt Children's, 2009. ISBN 9780152065461. \$16.00. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

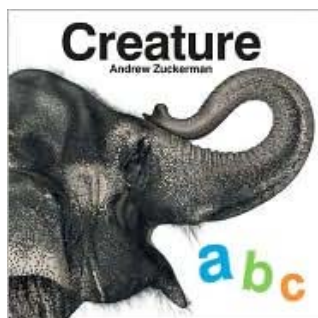
Genre: Picture Books; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Restaurants--Juvenile fiction; Chinese Americans--Juvenile fiction; Grandfathers--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Louie loves Fridays because he goes out to eat dinner at his grandfather's restaurant in Chinatown. He knows all the people that work in the restaurant and the jobs they do. Louie and his grandfather order all sorts of dishes: egg rolls, chow mein, fish, dumplings, steamed crab, and lots of rice. Dinner ends with fortune cookies and orange slices, which Louie and his friend Franklin use to make silly happy smiles.

The collage illustrations are beautiful - while reminiscent of Eric Carle, they are less dreamy and have a greater sense of action. Some collage pieces have been painted and retain a strong brushstroke texture, while other pieces are made from origami paper, photographs (especially of different dishes of food), and are even trimmed from menus and labels. Bright vibrant colors and occasionally sharp angles of pieces make the clatter and motion of the Chinese restaurant come alive. Isadora is a Caldecott honor winner for her book *Ben's Trumpet*, and *Bring on that Beat* was a Parents' Choice Silver Honor book.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)



Zuckerman, Andrew. *Creature ABC*. Illustrated by Zuckerman, Andrew. Chronicle Books LLC, 2009. ISBN 9780811869782. \$19.99. 120 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

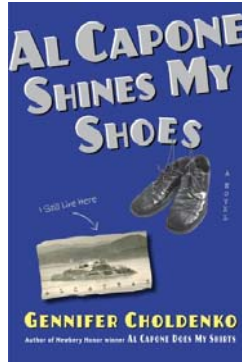
Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Animals --Juvenile literature; English language --Alphabet --Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

A scaly hand leaves children guessing what stands for A. The next page reveals an alligator from its sharp teeth to its powerful tail. Andrew Zuckerman's amazing close up photos show the details of a chameleon's skin right down to its color changing eyeball. A rare look of a giraffe is seen from a new angle as he leans his long neck backwards and looks the camera in the eye. "I" stands for insect, shown as many things, like beetles, grasshoppers, ants, and bees. Come face to face with a long maned lion and his prickly tongue. See the red snout of the mandrill. Explore nocturnal animals like the badger, bat, and loris. End on a furry, striped note.

A glossary of animals and their interesting facts is available in the back. One fact is that "Jackrabbits, also called hares, can run up to 45 miles per hour and jump as high as 10 feet." Although X's animal was "oryx", the other letters were placed with appropriate animals. The photographs are what make readers want to pick the book up.

Volume 30 no. 2 (November/December 2009)



Choldenko, Gennifer. *Al Capone Shines My Shoes*. Dial, 2009. ISBN 9780803734609. \$17.99. 274 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

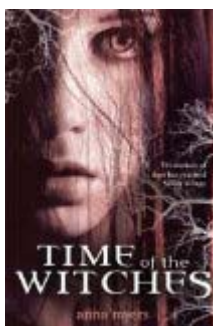
Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: United States Penitentiary, Alcatraz Island, California--Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

At the end of *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, Moose gets Natalie accepted into the Esther P. Marinoff School with the help of Al Capone. But Moose isn't through with Capone yet. At the beginning of this book, Moose receives a note from Capone saying that it is Moose's turn to do a favor for him. Now Moose must decide if he should tell the truth to his parents about Capone's part in getting Natalie into the school, which would get his father fired and get Natalie kicked out, or complete the favor for Capone. But besides his Capone troubles, all of Moose's friends are upset with him because he tries too hard to please everyone, even to the point of hurting others. When things start to settle down with his friends and Moose thinks he is even with Capone, Natalie comes home to visit and brings a prison bar spreader in her luggage. Moose finds out that convict #105, who held Natalie's hand in the first book, was released from prison and has visited Natalie at the school. Convict #105 asked Natalie to bring the bar spreader back to Alcatraz to help the working convicts escape. Luckily, the bar spreader wasn't found by the convicts, but that doesn't mean they won't try to escape. When the warden comes home to celebrate the arrival of his new baby boy, the working convicts plan an escape by holding Moose, Piper, and Natalie hostage and taking a ferry back to the mainland. But thanks to Natalie and Moose, the convicts' plans are foiled and they are recaptured.

Choldenko's second book completely complements *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. This sequel brings back all the wonderfully complex characters from the first book and helps readers delve even deeper into the characters' lives. The book has a solid plot that Choldenko never sways from. It is an engaging and entertaining read for readers nine and older—a great addition to any library.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)



Myers, Anna. *Time of the Witches*. Walker & Company, 2009. ISBN 978-0802798206. \$16.99. 197 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction; Occult fiction;

Subject: Witchcraft --Juvenile fiction; Trials (Witchcraft) --Juvenile fiction; Salem (Mass.) --

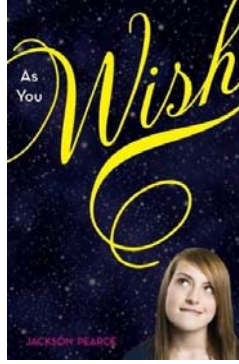
History --Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775 --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Drucilla Overbey and Gabe Matson have been together since their birth but now live in separate homes. Drucilla moves to the Putnam house. Once there, she soon notices Mistress Ann Putnam's obsession over her past miscarriages. Ann swears her babies were murdered by someone in the Salem community. Ann's obsession is renewed when a new minister moves next door and brings along a Barbados slave woman called Tituba. Soon, she and many of the local girls gather at the Parris home, while the minister is away, to harmlessly participate in Tituba's "black arts" of fortune telling. But the youngest Parris child cannot handle lying to her parents about the gatherings. A strange stupor comes over her and other girls act odd to cover their interaction with Tituba. Their antics, encouraged by Ann Putnam, go overboard by singling out innocent women and men, in the community, as witches. Gabe is horrified by Drucilla's actions and rejects her. Because of his hatred for Ann Putnam, Gabe is accused of being a witch. To save Gabe, Drucilla makes a plan to end the witch hunts by accusing the governor's wife and a famous minister's mother of being witches. In the end, the trials stop, Gabe is saved, their friendship is rekindled, and Drucilla is given a chance to start life anew.

Myers work is based on the actual Salem witch hunts and trials in 1692. From her research, Myers believes that ,through group suggestion, these girls actually believed they were possessed, and took it too far. The book is a very suspenseful and enlightening read. *Time of the Witches* can be a great classroom resource in studying the Salem witch trials.

Volume 30 no.2 (November/December 2009)





Pearce, Jackson. *As You Wish*. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061661525. \$16.99. 298 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

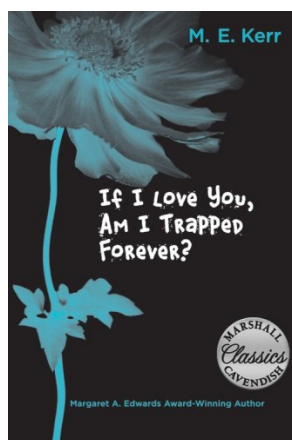
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Self-esteem--Juvenile fiction; Popularity--Juvenile fiction; Genies--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

A man only Viola can see appears and demands she make three wishes. After being heartbroken when her relationship with her best friend Lawrence ends, Viola is depressed and wants nothing more than to belong. Jinn, the wish granter, only wants Viola to hurry up and make her wishes so he can return to his world, where he does not age. Regardless of his pushiness, Viola takes her time before she wishes, with Jinn bound to her until she does. As Jinn spends more time with Viola, he goes from pressuring her to grant a wish so he can return home, to wanting her to never make a wish so he can stay. Another genie from Jinn's world comes to press Viola into making her wish. Viola makes a wish to save Lawrence. Jinn is sucked back into his world, but he switches jobs to become a presser so he can visit Viola. She has been made to forget Jinn, but as he stands there with roses of every imaginable color, a memory begins to stir.

The alternating viewpoints between the main character Viola and her genie, Jinn, convey the story with personal details and a variety of viewpoints. Viola learns from her breakup that she does not have to have someone love her in order to be whole. She overcomes her self doubt and accepts herself, and her friends, regardless of popularity. The ending of the story leaves many questions to be answered, but the book has a unique plot with a well-developed protagonist.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)



Kerr, M. E. *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*. Marshall Cavendish, 2009. ISBN 9780761455455. \$16.99. 178 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fiction;

Subject: High schools--Juvenile fiction; Popularity--Juvenile fiction; Dating (Social customs)--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

"You use the words winner and loser to frequently Alan," she said, "I don't like it."  
"It's a fact of life, though. There are the winners and there are the losers. Of course," I added generously, "there are the in-betweens."

Alan Bennett is a popular, cocky, sixteen-year-old jock, with good looks and an even better looking girlfriend, Leah. He has everything going for him until Dunc Stein, nicknamed Doomed by his classmates, moves into town. Doomed is tall, balding, and refuses to play sports, as well as being what Alan calls "of the Jewish persuasion." Doomed surprises everyone by publishing his own newspaper featuring ads for one-night mystery romances. All the girls flock after poetry-reading, hard-hearted Dunc, but none can keep him for longer than one night--that is until Dunc reads Leah's secret ad to his paper and answers it. They plan a secret date while Alan is in New York meeting his father who abandoned him before birth. Alan finds the letter between the two and takes his revenge by spending long nights with Dunc's young, beautiful stepmother, Catherine. Just as Alan forgives and forgets about Leah, Catherine runs away with his football coach.

*If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*, originally printed in 1973, has been selected as a Marshall Cavendish Classic. The characters are unusual, realistic, and hilarious. The theme is centered around love, the different types of love, and how much love changes. Relationships are scrutinized and love is defined in many ways. The ending is abrupt, but allows the reader to imagine the mysterious future however he or she wishes.

Volume 30, no. 2 (November/December 2009)

Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan*. Samuel French, 1928. ISBN 9780573613913. \$7.50 / script; \$75 / performance fee. 95 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Adventure plays; Fantasy plays; Humorous plays;

Subject: Fantasy--Juvenile drama; Pirates--Juvenile drama; Children--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Childhood is fleeting

Production Requirements: Extensive scenery and fly system, extensive special effects

Acts: 5

Run Time: 2 hours

Characters: 25

Cast: 7 + female, 15 + male

Time Period: Early 1900's

This original, non-musical version of the popular children's story was actually written by Barrie before the book. It very closely resembles the children's novel, with the majority of the dialogue being the same. In addition the script includes in-depth stage directions, written by the author, that closely resemble the narration in the book. The story begins with the Darling children in the nursery with their parents. When the parents leave for a dinner party, Peter Pan arrives and takes the children away to Never Land. While there, they have adventures with fairies, mermaids, Indians and of course, Captain Hook. After a large battle at the climax, the children defeat Hook and return home to their parents.

This is a delightful script with all of Barrie's charm shining through. The dialogue is natural and engaging, and the plot will doubtless keep the audience enthralled. The author includes an immense amount of stage direction, which should prove very helpful in character development. According to those stage directions, this play should be produced on a grand scale with an enormous amount of special effects. Although many of the scenes could be simplified, it would be difficult to produce this play without a fly system for the actors.

Volume 30, no.2 (November/December 2009)