Book Reviews


The greatest shock to American youth would be to learn that the Headmaster could or would assign a summer project about local history. The children in this story (who are going to enter what we would call Grade Six in August) all live in a row of ancient houses on Crumble Lane in Stoneborough. Maggie lives at Number Ten, the Marinsky twins at Number Nine, Bob at Number Fourteen, and Ken at Number Fifteen. By the time they finish their chores and get together, they discover that all the easy and near-at-hand projects have been taken by other classmates, so they reluctantly decide to research the family that lived at Highbeck Hall and who owned the cotton mills at Stoneborough. The Highbeck Hall is situated high on the moor, abandoned and reputed to be haunted.

Once they get started in their research, they meet people who worked at Highbeck Hall, at Highbeck Farm, and in the Rillsden Mills. The children not only discover the working conditions of the common people but also the motivations of the mill owners. Those who have been to Lowell, Massachusetts--our first urban National Park--will find the mill owners/mill girls presentation good preparation for reading this book.

For me the finest part of the book is the perspective of the dying Lady Elinor Rillsden Greenhaugh as she passes her world to her granddaughter. Some of the best writing in the book concerns the drawing of people closer together: Ken to his older, crippled brother (who helps with their research) and the Marinsky twins to the Russian grandmother. And with all of this a number of surprises make the book fun and exciting.--T.H.


*The Crimson Oak* takes place in a Russian village in 1739. Peter, a twelve-year-old peasant boy, encounters the exiled Princess Elizabeth. He diverts the attention of a bear from her and in doing so may have saved her life. In gratitude, she gives him a twig and tells him to keep it and at some future time to bring it to her, and she will give him a proper reward. Peter wants an education, an impossible dream for a peasant. And in his search for a way to learn gets him imprisoned in a dungeon.
But in the end the promise of the princess brings Peter his reward.

The story has a ring of authenticity, transporting the reader to 18th century Russia and depicting the hardships of the peasants. The portrayal of Peter wins the reader's concern and sympathy for his suffering. The plot is filled with action and suspense to keep the reader engrossed in the story.—C.B.


A brief, well-written discussion of the uses and abuses of fireworks, this book is an oasis in a desert of information on a fascinating subject. The clearly organized text and beautifully reproduced old photos and prints show historical uses of fireworks, their origins, disasters resulting from their use, the conditions of their manufacturer, and examples of the present day uses. Without undue emphasis on the dangers of unpredictable materials, or enticement into experimentation with them, the book offers enough details for most elementary needs. Also included is a table of states with laws governing the sale and use of fireworks (outdated in the case of Utah whose laws changed this year), and a complete index.—J.F.


Father and son Masaichi and Mitsumasa Anno show how factorial numbers expand to a tremendous size starting with one island in the sea and ending with 10 jars in each box in the cupboards of the rooms of the houses in the villages of two kingdoms on the island. It's a simple, beautifully illustrated way to show why the mathematical symbols for factorials is an exclamation mark. After the Annos use two pages to show 40, 320 dots or $8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$ (40, 320 dots) and still have 9 or 10 times or 362,880 dots left to picture, they explain that it would take 180 more pages to do so. Instead the last three pages are used to define and explain factorials and to project some practical uses that can be made of them. The book admirably achieves its purpose of showing how quickly numbers can expand and of helping the reader to sense the order, mystery and excitement of the universe.—L.H.

Whether Byrd Baylor sings of ecology as she does in *The Desert is Theirs*, or of the haunted coyote nights as she does in *Moon Song*, her voice is the voice of the great American desert. Desolate and bone-broken or awash with moonshine, it is her land and her song.

*Moon Song* celebrates the Pima legend of Coyote, born beneath a brittlebrush to the Moon who could not stay to nurse him but must keep her appointments with the world. It tells of his futile chase to catch her, his dawning self-sufficiency and of their age-old communion through the moonlit nights. There's something to be said to today's latch-key child by Coyote's story, and there's an innate acquaintance with poetry to be had from reading this story to young children.

The illustrations are not Baylor's this time, but capture in their soft grey and black (what else for night desert?) the endless stretches of sand shadowed by lonely Coyote, and evoke the echo of his evensong. Use this one!—J.F.

LC 82-73217. $11.89. 200p.

"Whoever removes those things from the church does so at his own peril. I abjure you by the living God not to endanger your immortal soul. 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord', Remigius Baart."

Remigius Baart is a priest turned to evil. Some say he's been seen haunting the old church. Johnny Dixon only half believed the stories until he found a hollowed-out book in the dark corners under the church. Inside was a blue ushabti (an ancient Egyptian figurine) and scroll containing Father Baart's cryptic warning. Johnny takes 'these things' home, and the nightmare begins.

Winner of the Utah Children's Book Award for *The Letter, the Witch, and the Ring*, John Bellairs has crafted another spooky, thrilling and chilling novel. Bellairs is a master of magical stories of the supernatural for younger readers, and it is a pleasure to read his creations. He has unusual talent for broadening a reader's horizons with skillfully blended tidbits of knowledge and delightful yet thought-provoking descriptions. Imagery is his forte.

Bellairs has, as usual, created a cast of memorable characters. You won't lose Professor Childermass, an unforgettable and
eccentric friend, in the crowd of characters encountered during years of reading.

John Bellairs knows what young people (all people) like when it comes time to be frightened. He leads us artfully and tastefully through a high class ghost story.--M.O.T.


This is a lovely book on a significant theme—death. Yet it is almost too lovely, leaving the reader with an unusual sense of beauty about death without deep sorrow. The story is told through beautiful photographs of a leaf who goes through spring and summer. When fall arrives, the leaf, Freddie, has difficulty interpreting the changes. A wiser leaf explains that they are all about to die, but that they have served their purpose well. It is never clear how this leaf, who is only as old as Freddie, has such deep understanding and knowledge of the seasons, the purposes of life, and death.--K.S.


These twin paperbacks present almost 150 ways to fool your friends and learn about the physical world at the same time. Instructions for tricks that seem impossible but aren't, and tricks that seem easy but can't be done, are included in sufficient detail to enable the reader to perform like a master. Explanations show why the tricks work the way they do. By understanding the principles of gravity, mechanics, fluids, logic, energy and perception, young readers can amaze friends and adults alike, keeping a friend in a chair by using only one finger, making smoke come from your fingertips and holding water in a sieve.


Barbara Cooney's delightful picturebook about Miss Rumphius will push readers to ask themselves what they can do to make the world more beautiful. They will find it hard to top the gift of beauty given by the Lupine Lady but Cooney's lovely blue and pink flowers will surely inspire them to try. The
author-illustrator has captured a lifetime of curiosity about service to the world by a school teacher named Miss Rumphius. After climbing mountains, crossing deserts, and making friends everywhere, she finally gives up traveling when she injures her back disembarking from a camel. Her third and final goal in life is to do something to make the world more beautiful. When she finds a way to do it through lupines her health is restored and she scatters them everywhere. The illustrations are delightful studies in blue, emphasizing the ocean, which has taken her to so many places, and the lupines, which she has taken over fields and headlands.—L.H.


*Strega Nona’s Magic Lessons* is another tale about *Strega Nona* presented with humor and illustrated in lavish detail. Tomie de Paola has a way of making his books with an Italian flavor really come alive.

Strega Nona gives lessons in magic to Bambolona, the baker's daughter. These lessons are complicated when Big Anthony, disguising himself as Antonia, asks for lessons too.

The ending seems a little sudden and somewhat unclear. Was Strega Nona really changed into a toad? Can any of Big Anthony's promises be taken seriously? Perhaps the happily-ever-after finish was not really justified.—C.B.


*The Maze Stone* by Eileen Dunlap is another other-world story in a small town in Scotland. Fanny, raised by her grandmother who took charms, spells, herbs, and druids seriously, recognizes the danger her step-sister Hester is in as she becomes more and more infatuated with the handsome new teacher just arrived at their school, Nimmo Lessing. He wears a pendant of a maze which matches the stone Fanny found in the garden and the marks on a stone in the hearth of the fireplace in the Mowbray's sitting room, probably a stone from the earlier Russell house once on this spot. From that house in 1914 William Maitland had disappeared while his fiancee waited outside in the rig. At the local museum in Hartslawhead Fanny recognizes the picture of William Maitland to be the same as Nimmo Lessing. But the picture is stolen before Fanny can get any of the family to see it.
While Fanny's father, Dr. Mowbray, is away in Aberdeen interviewing for a position at the university--because of the quarry coming to their back yard and to get Hester away--Fanny knows her father and step-mother do not see that Hester is no longer free, that there just isn't any time left. Only she can save Hester whom Nimmo intends to take as a bride to his world. He had cared enough about his bride-to-be some 70 years ago to leave her behind at the last minute. Fanny follows Nimmo and Hester up Bieldlaw to a door and inside. Armed with her recognition of evil, the stone maze she found in the garden, and some pink sprigs of betony, a spike of Saint John's wort, and yellow starred herb bennet bound with a blade of strong grass, she stops Hester from eating the apple and becoming one of the many in gray with leaves on their heads. She leads Hester through the mountain maze, because she had learned the pattern so well, and back out to a waiting, worried family just before the circle of trees on the hill bursts into flames.

While it is much like many stories of those lured away by strange, evil, fairy folk, never to be heard of again, I wanted to finish it. The strength of the story is Fanny's recognition of evil and what it is, what power it has that makes it possible for her to be strong enough to fight and be a match for Nimmo.--E.W.


LC 83-2832. $8.95. unpaged.

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Have you ever wondered exactly what a pigboy does? Well, wonder no longer. Eddy B. tells exactly what and how in this perfectly delightful little book. According to a former farm boy, a sow with a litter of piglets is much too ferocious for such high jinks as Eddy B. describes. However, since the author was also a farm boy, and since the book is fun, we'll assume that either Eddy B. is especially daring and quick--and his father somewhat laid back--or that Southern pigs aren't quiet so tough and mean as their Western cousins.

Children (and adults) will love the simple but wryly humorous story and find the illustrations irresistible. Each piglet is simply "wriggling" with personality and their mother is both loving and grouchy as a proper mother pig should be. If you enjoyed *The Book of the Pig* (or even if you didn't) you'll love *Eddy B. Pigboy.*--A.M.

Gracie, her parents, and her three sisters anticipated the birth of a new baby with great joy and excitement. The one thing lacking in an almost perfect family was a brother, and they had all "crossed their fingers" that this baby would be the long awaited Robert Charles Prayther, Jr. Wonder of wonders—the baby was a boy—but something had gone wrong. When their father finally came home from the hospital, he seemed so sad and reluctant to talk. Robert Charles, Jr. had become Crawford (Mother's maiden name), and things somehow didn't seem to be right with the world.

The birth of a handicapped baby was a real test of the family's strength and stability. Gracie wondered if her family would ever enjoy the lightness and fun which had been a part of their lives before Crawford. Would her mother and father ever smile, or laugh, or clown around again?

It was a long time before the family was able to begin rebuilding a normal family life, and it was Gracie who eventually had the wisdom to see that sometimes pain can also bring growth, understanding and, finally, acceptance—even joy. Sensitive and well written. —A.M.


While some may justifiably argue this is the old orphan-kid-rags-to-riches theme, the story is well worth reading because of new twists and striking language. The new twists include the use of a dog, a key and a mansion to test young Jackson's mettle, and the presence of another waif, female, in the middle of things. The striking language paints lingering images. Jackson's face, when struggling with a decision, was "screwed up like a piece of dirty paper." And the approaching dog is not to be taken lightly. "Huge: as big as a donkey, nearly, with eyes like streetlamps and jaws like an oven door." The art is adequate, and sometimes striking, as in the montage of front doors Jackson fits the key to in his search for the one lock it opens.


If you've wondered why it is lucky for a bride to be kissed by a chimney sweep, why sweeps were regarded as thieves in England, why it is good luck to bow to a sweep three times, or why
Charles Dickens wrote about them in *Oliver Twist*, read James Giblins 50-page book *Chimney Sweeps*. You’ll find out when the occupation started, why young boys got involved in it, the social legislation it created in England, the difference between the social status of sweeps in England and Germany, and some funny superstitions surrounding this unusual kind of work. You’ll also find that chimney sweeps are again in demand because of the worldwide energy crisis and that in San Francisco in the 1880’s they were regarded as entertainers. It is a short readable book filled with interesting facts about an unusual way to earn a living.—L.H.


The truth about fathers is that they are, like most of us, human. The father in Gray’s book is a little more human than some, as during the process of the contrived story, he dumps his role as adult and father for one somewhere between high school hero and stop-the-world bum; protects his old buddy who has raped and assaulted a young prostitute, and turns the lifelong relationship with his adolescent daughter (Stephanie) inside out.

The story is Stephanie’s, but the character is her father, and the result is a somewhat unsatisfying treatment of a problem that is, undoubtedly, more prevalent than we realize. Perhaps this is the beginning of a new genre, one that deals with male problems in a stressful world as those of the past ten years have dealt with female ones.

The action is pat, the solution predictable, but young adults will probably find the situation interesting enough to make the book worthwhile. One brief explicitly sexual scene between Stephanie and her boyfriend, is vital to the plot.—J.F.


June Finch was excited about the sixth grade social studies project. Her class had decided to participate in a foster-grandparent program at Reed’s Retirement Ranch and June could hardly wait to begin.

After June’s father died, her mother had to go to work full-time, and rent a small, cheap inner-city apartment far from their friends and family. June was terribly lonely and longed for friends. She was terribly disappointed, therefore, when she
found that her assigned foster-grandfather was crotchety old Franklin Cooper, the most difficult, ill-tempered person at the Ranch.

June felt like giving up, but she cared so much about finding someone who needed her that she became diverted to win the old man's friendship, hopeless as it seemed.

After months, June's persistence finally began to pay off. Franklin never became a jovial, bubbling grandfather type but June's understanding of him increased, and he, in turn, became more trustful of her. Their relationship gradually became important to them both. Their hard-won friendship eventually opened the door to what June and her mother hoped would be a positive change in their lives and his. Holl sensitively portrays a believable relationship between a lonely but hopeful young girl and an equally lonely but distrustful old man.--A.M.


For anyone who wants to start a chicken farm or just to learn more about chickens, Hopf gives an interesting, but simple history of chickens. Do you know where the first chickens have been found? India! And when were they introduced to the Western Hemisphere? Hopf answers these questions and many more and also introduces the "wild relatives", the grouse, quail, pheasant, and others from the Southern Hemisphere. Although this book would not interest every child, it is interesting, informative, and well-written.--K.S.


In a time when classical mythology has stepped out of the fairytale shelves and taken a place as legitimate subject matter for fictional treatment, Norma Johnson's reputation is becoming well known. She does careful research and provides useful and interesting notes.

The Oedipus story is a well known as any in Greek mythology. But *The Days of the Dragon's Seed* fleshes out the nuances of character and action that explain Oedipus' all-too human frailities to make the story into a novel, dealing mainly with Oedipus' flight from the oracle's terrible pronouncement to his death, and only briefly with the tragedies of Antigone, his daughter, and her brothers. It is difficult enough to clothe
actual people in flesh centuries after they live even with adequate documentation, and to make the attempt with the shadowy figures of mythology and folklore is a gargantuan task of creating upon sticks. Often the humanity doesn't quite jell. Such is the case in this book. Johnston’s characters are always slightly larger than life, substantial onstage, but not at hand. And what the reader experiences in drama is prose. However, for the masses of young people who will never view the moving drama, the novel will serve to make the somewhat literature...a condition devoutly to be desired.—J.F.


Me me me me: not a novel, by M. E. Kerr is a delightful book. I think I enjoyed it even more than her novels, maybe because I’m closer to her times as a teenager than I am to contemporary teens. It was good to read the episodes that show up in the novels.

It's fun when she's younger and pretending. She and her best friend write to Ronald Reagan for pictures and autographs. To be sure of getting an answer back she says she's a cripple. When her father finds out he makes her send picture, autograph, and letter back with an explanation. She and her friend fight over which one will have him for her husband when they play house.

She conveys a sense of boarding school, junior college, and university, including sorority rushing.

Many young people have no sense of WW II period. This gives a sense of the time of trains overcrowded with servicemen, families sticking pins on maps as they followed battles, every family having someone in the service (her brother is an ensign in the navy). She even dates a serviceman.

She credits her own not very complete diaries and her father's very complete journals (he says women write in diaries and men write in journals) with making this book possible. It's a good word for journal writing. Her last name is Meeker, hence her pseudonym M. E. Kerr.

I think all ages would enjoy it. Parents whose teens are reading her novels should read it and the novels. They would better appreciate the appeal the books have for the young reader. They might better understand the young people too. And the young people who enjoy her novels will enjoy getting to know the real M. E. Kerr.—E.W.

The book jacket illustration on *Beginners’ Love* (rumpled sheets on a bed) invites the reader to think the book is preoccupied with teenage sex. And seventeen year old Joel certainly spends all his time thinking about it. After meeting Leda, who is not shy, more experienced, and very willing, the two spend all their time finding places to go to bed with each other. But when Leda is afraid she has become pregnant, the two begin to worry, blame each other, and even have a few concerns about how they'd feel if the planned abortion destroyed an especially bright poet or scientist. But Leda has the abortion, and the two drift away from each other, each trying to make a future that is a little wiser than the past. The tragedy of the book is that these two youngsters were not ready or able to face the problems parenthood thrust upon them. Joel’s ambivalent feelings and guilt were convincing evidence that teenage sex is not a good or necessary part of growing up. Feelings and decisions are involved that adolescents are not ready to handle. However, Klein spends so much time describing their love making efforts and so little time on the consequences that young readers may miss them. At the end, however, they would have to sense Joel’s unsettled feelings as he refuses to take his younger sister to a dirty movie, making the excuse that he has "seen it already."—L.H.


Three little gophers got lost one foggy night. They finally spotted a house but nobody was at home. They were so tired they decided to stay there anyway. But before they could go to sleep, they were frightened by knocking at the door. In came two bunny rabbits who decided to join them in the big, wide bed. But before they could go to sleep they were frightened by knocking at the door. In rushed three raccoons who decided to join them in the big, wide bed...Eventually the owner arrives and...?

A husband and wife team from Japan, the Koides, have produced a little gem of a picture book. The story is reassuring but with enough mystery to provide a tingle of suspense. The carefully detailed illustrations are very appealing.—A.M.

*Strawberry Shortcake's Favorite Mother Goose Rhymes* will have an instant appeal to children because of the current popularity of Strawberry Shortcake. It contains both well-known and less-known rhymes. Three of the verses: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "I Love Little Pussy," and "Mary had a Little Lamb," all with known authors and "Enesy weensy Spider," an American verse are not true Mother Goose.

The illustrations are detailed, colorful, and accurately portray the rhymes. It is an innovative touch to see the king in "Sing a Song of Sixpence" portrayed as a villian.

The book was well organized and had a balance between verses and rhymes but lacked an index for ease in locating a particular title.--C.B.


Beautiful color pictures and simply written descriptions introduce young children to a country they have all heard of but, few know well. The book introduces more than just Moscow and Leningrad. It takes the children to small towns, distant villages, an apartment, and even a school room. It's a fine book to help young children learn about one of our most important world neighbors.--K.S.


Laura Jean Basset didn't mind being a girl; she just didn't want to be treated like one. She had little use for girlish fripperies and thought that to be pretty like Floramae Williams was the worst possible fate. Following in the footsteps of two older brothers, Laura Jean had to scramble to earn her nickname, "Scrappy" and the position of left half back on the boy's soccer team.

Scrappy's team, sponsored by Joe's Garage, had finally adjusted to the idea of a girl on their team. The fact that she was one of their strongest players no doubt helped somewhat. But then something really catastrophic happened. Joe announced that he was retiring and that the Mary Louise Children's Shop would be their new sponsor, with Mary Louise as coach.

Surprisingly, the idea of a female coach bothered Scrappy even more.
than it did her teammates. She eventually adjusted to this "problem" as well as to other aspects of growing up.

Sports-minded middle-grade girls will probably enjoy identifying with Scrappy though there is nothing particular memorable about either the characters or the story.--A.M.


Jonathan knows when he sees Cream of Wheat for breakfast that he's in for a bad day, but who could guess how bad? When Dr. Mack fills the helium balloon with flu vaccine and gives Jonathan a helium shot, Phyllis Naylor's new picture book is off to a no-holds-barred day, and Jonathan discovers the advantages of flying high.

Kay Chorao's carefully detailed illustrations portray Jonathan's plight with cheerul humor and the whole book is a delightful exercise in reasonable fantasy.—J.F.


If you've never seen a leprechaun, it may be because you don't have the gift—the gift of believing in little people. Brian decides to catch one to convince his Aunt Nora that Great Grandad's stories are true. When he finally drags one to her, all she sees is a cat. With Grandad's help Brian realizes that people see what they want to see. Nixon has captured the mystical magic of the green dells where the fairy folk dwell and she does it in a way that will let the reader, too, believe what he wants to believe. However, in this book, the believers in magic have the last word, and Brian overcomes some of his own fears as he both receives and gives a gift to his Grandad.

The visit to Ireland that inspired the story comes through in vivid descriptions of twisting rock walls, blue haze, glimmers of gold and green and perfect circles ringed with hawthorn trees. If you've been to Ireland you'll recognize the place; if you've not been, you may begin to believe in pookas, gingerhaired fairies and banshees.—L.H.

LC 83-2835. $11.95. 214p.

In the last of the fifteen Witch World books, Andre Norton recounts the perilous quest of Tirtha, who is joined by Falconer, a falcon, and Alon, a boy. Told by Tirtha, the tale is the classic battle between good and evil. The three begin the
the struggle as isolated, lonely questers, who refuse to give in to the chaos surrounding them. The trust between the two adults grows slowly, for Tirtha knows that Falconers hate and distrust women. But the child is different and, as in life, helps to form a strong bond between the three humans. The evil is believable and so powerful that the reader struggles with Tirtha as she hangs onto life by a thread, yet not so overwhelming as in some modern fantasy. The strength to overcome it comes not from the strength of one person, as in L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time*, but in the unifying of all three and finally to the determination of the two adults united to stand against having their will taken from them. The conclusion is no surprise, but satisfying.--L.H.


A study in fear with an O'Henry surprise ending, this slight book might be a boon for helping a young child face the new world away from home. Big brother (the narrator) is quite clearly drawn, but the frightened younger boy is nebulous and both remain unnamed. The illustrations, close to cartoons, adequately picture the story line, but add nothing to it and are not really large enough to justify the book's use as a read-aloud picture book except with very small groups. Classed a 'concept' book by the publisher (i.e. written to a purpose) plodding plot and fuzzy characters, the book will not provide as much reassurance as would a good picturebook showing a sympathetic, well-drawn character experiencing and overcoming fear.--J.F.


"She was so conventional. Wasn't she? She always did the expected thing. She worried about her grades, she was never late, never careless, someone you could depend on" was Daniel's assessment. "I guess I take after my mother most... But sometimes I'd rather be more like my dad. I knew, all the time I was growing up, that I had to make both of them happy. You see, he expects me to be like him and she expects me to be like her. I always thought I had to do both. Well, now I'm older, and I don't want to be a carbon copy of anyone. I want to be me; but, when I'm me, I'm afraid they don't like me very much," was Lily's own view.
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Lily was anorexic. The *Hunger Steam* captures the classic details of the anorexic personality and family patterns—the desperate need for the anorexic to take charge of her own life, to be noticed and accepted by her family, and the family's inability to communicate, to face problems. But this is no medical treatise. You'll find the characters convincing, the dialogue natural, and the dramatization of a serious social and personal problem realistic and believable. An especially timely book for both young adults and their parents, anorexic or not.---H.M.


Dyna Suggs was really a decent girl. Life had just not been easy after her parents left her with Gram and never came back. She loved Gram, but the Social Security check had just not been quite enough for two. Still, Gram had convinced the judge that Dyna should go to reform school. Dyna had vowed never to steal again no matter how Frog might persuade her to help him in his burglaries. But registration fees at Bonneville were $37. not the $20 she had expected. So she'd help Frog one more time. But this would be the last. And it was. Mrs. Simpson's creative writing class convinced her that she could make something of herself. And the project to write a script for the national TV show, *On Camera*, brought the fifteen class members close together, especially Dyna and Parker. The poetry reading at the Liberty Part Senior Citizens' Center that Dyna arranged for Gram, Oscar, Aunt Grace, Miss Mary and other old people of the neighborhood gave the class not only the idea for a topic for the script—the plight of the elderly in America—but a cause.

Yet the past has a way of intruding on the present, especially when you have a police record. And two weeks before graduation, Frog's confession brought Dyna back to juvenile detention. What would Dyna do now? She had failed Gram; she had failed the judge; she had failed her friends, but worse she had failed herself. Bitterness of all was missing graduation.

A touching and moving story of underdogs—young and old—who are able to rise above the adversity that the circumstances of life have put them in. It's good to find an upbeat story of modern teens who succeed in spite of their problems. Readers 14 and over will find this story too good to put down. It will especially enjoy the Salt Lake City setting in the Liberty Park and Marmalade district.---H.M.

It often appears that schools are the most antisocial institutions known to man. This book does nothing to dispel that gloomy notion. A busload of inner-city school children have come to Bellant to do a historical project on Sinhashgal Island, opposite the small, ingrown Northern Irish village of Ballyhania. Interminable warfare immediately erupts between village and city children, ending only with a shooting incident in which the weapon is a poorly constructed homemade gun. In addition to this story of inexplicable stupidity, there is an undercurrent of the legend of the Spaniards who were massacred on the island by the natives of this same village.

Nora refuses to take sides in the fracas notwithstanding some cruel bullying. She wants to work out a relationship with her new stepmother, and she doesn't want any incident to spoil this. And so it is Nora who ultimately intervenes in the dispute—most through circumstance initially, but ultimately through choice—and who becomes the heroine in a number of ways. In addition, Nora unravels the mystery of the Spaniards.

But it is the final chapter that moves this book from the commonplace to the outstanding. If the story ended at Chapter 12, it would be a good book. In Chapter 13, Nora demonstrates what she has learned from these events. Actually, this is the final sentence that gives the book its insight, meaning, and great illumination. --T.H.


In this companion volume to Last Was Lloyd the author gently probes the feelings of Lloyd's twelve-year-old friend, Ancill, whose father has been listed as Missing-In-Action in Vietnam for more than ten years.

Ancill was just a baby when her father left, but it was she who refused to even consider the idea that he might be dead. Her mother and older sisters, with the support of Ancill's father's parents, were finally able to accept the probability that he was not coming back and were attempting to build a normal life. Ancill's mother had dated and eventually fallen in love with Harvey, a young newspaperman who had lost a wife with two children in a tragic accident. Their marriage delighted Ancill's sisters and grandparents, but Ancill resented all of Harvey's friendly overtures. She considered her mother and sisters having a happy family life without her father disloyal. Everybody tried to understand her feelings at first, but their patience began to wear thin. For Ancill, these truly were the first hard times.

It was her old friend, Lloyd, having lived through three "fathers" who was able to help Ancill begin to understand that it is not necessarily disloyal to a loved one to be happy and congenial with others. A perceptive and sympathetic portrayal of a troubled young girl.--A.M.


In 98 illustrations (including the dust jacket and end papers) and no words, Spier has captured a family's celebration of the Christmas holiday. The book's strength lies in its detail and variety. Spier has as many as ten and as few as one illustration on a double page spread, and the layout of the art is not duplicated throughout the book. The changing pattern of each page continues to stimulate and delight the eye, as do the refreshing honest scenes portrayed. We see the careful preparation of the downtown area for Christmas, witness the decorations going up at home, and partake in the planning of an elaborate Christmas feast. We also see the aftermath of Christmas clutter in the business district, fight our way through the maelstrom of wrapping paper and boxes after presents are opened, and watch the family cat work over a turkey carcass in a kitchen buried under dirty dishes and leftovers. From the frenzy of preparation through the peace of a moment Christmas Eve to the vacuuming up of the last pine needle, Spier's whimsical illustrations thoughtfully and warmly portray the experience of those who love and survive the biggest holiday of the year.


Peter Fieldmouse's first experience with a conversation club gave him such a headache that he decided to start his own club, for listening. His novel idea appealed to the conversation club who were allowed to join only if they agreed to follow his very strict rules.

A simple, amusing story with a gentle message. The illustrations are finely detailed and very appealing. --A.M.


Somewhere there are undoubtedly some adults who sprang from that generation of N-I-C-K-E-L-Y N-O-N-E-S-E-N-G-I-L-E-S-K-E-E-P-E-R-S who still...
to understand her feelings at first, but their patience began to wear thin. For Ancil, these truly were the first hard times. It was her old friend, Lloyd, having lived through three "fathers" who was able to help Ancil begin to understand that it is not necessarily disloyal to a loved one to be happy and congenial with others. A perceptive and sympathetic portrayal of a troubled young girl.—A.M.

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Peter Fieldmouse's first experience with a conversation club gave him such a headache that he decided to start his own club, for listening. His novel idea appealed to the conversation club who were allowed to join only if they agreed to follow his very strict rules.
A simple, amusing story with a gentle message. The illustrations are finely detailed and very appealing.—A.M.

Somewhere there are undoubtedly some adults who sprang from that generation of M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E keteers who still
feel a pang of affection upon viewing ubiquitous black ears and wide grin. I am not one. Mickey Mouse cartoons were fun. Mickey Mouse reading books were (and are) dull, and this counting book is no exception. So who can make an interesting counting book? Try Mitsu Anno, Eric Carle, Tana Hoban or Ezra Keats for starters! However, in deference to absolute honesty, it is necessary to recall the well-thumbed covers of previous Mickey Mouse issues and to be aware that children do not find commercialism innately distasteful. If you need counting books, this one is brightly colored and has numbers (but it's only nine inches high!)

As in the Touch, Taste, and Smell book in this series, this book describes the process of eating and digesting food to the use of the derived nutrients in the body and the elimination of waste materials from the body. Each page contains a complete set of information on some subtopic of the process. New terms are printed in bold type and defined both in the text and in the glossary. The vividly colorful pictures lead the child's (or adult's) imagination to relate these procedures to his/her own body's workings. If all the books in this series are as well done as these, they will be a great addition to an elementary or junior high school library. --K.S.

This is an interesting introduction to three of the lesser known or discussed body senses. Each page is a complete description of some part of the story about how the senses work. It is written simply enough for a young child to read, yet includes enough complex information that an older child (or adult) also enjoys learning from it. New terminology is printed in bold type and defined in the glossary as well as in the text. The accompanying illustrations are vivid and colorful. They are so realistically drawn they begin to appear to be three-dimensional. Each component of the pictures is clearly, but unobtrusively labelled. This would be an excellent book (or set of books) to add to a library's collection on how the body works. --K.S.

Loudmouse is the youngest of four mice children who live with their parents under the floor in the Dowd house. The parents take great care to be unseen and unheard by humans, but well-meaning Loudmouse cannot communicate in anything less than a shout and continually threatens family security. All ends well as the misfit mouse saves the house from being burgled. The grateful Dowds make life for the mice smooth sailing from then on. A delightful ten-minute read-aloud that has been reprinted after being unavailable in recent years.


In brilliant colour and with stunning historical precision, Wilks has captured Victorian costume, outlook, and imagination in some of the best illustration of the century. *The Weather Works* displays the splendour of the Crystal Palace, and the machinery therein is more wonderous than that of the Great Exhibition. One is endlessly fascinated by the variety of the gear tooth shapes, the outrageous gauge readings, the impossible clock faces, the Meccano bridges, the Judgement of Paris, and the sequestration of the artist's initials.

But unfortunately all of this brilliance is too strongly reminiscent of *The Hunting of the Snark*, both in plot and in period, and it is here that the book fails, for the verse is, by British standards, retrograde. Having established an anapestic Carollian gallop, the author is expected to maintain Carollian precision -- but of 240 lines, less than a third have correct scansion and construction. Eight percent of the lines have feminine endings, with only two stanzas in the entire book being completely correct. On occasion, italicised words fall naturally unstressed positions, e.g., line 128. The story would have been far better in decent prose than in this kind of verse, a hodge-podge that repeatedly breaks down into prose, anyway (e.g., line 7).

Children deserve nothing short of the very best, which leads this reviewer to hope the Mr. Wilks's editor will shortly give him a handsome commission to illustrate a lavish edition of *The Hunting of the Snark* and thus bring together the superlative nonsense poetry of Carroll and the fantastic art of Wilks into what would become a treasure of the century. --T.K.H.

Laurence Yep, a talented writer as his track record shows, has given Mark Twain fans a fairly accurate look at Twain's younger days in San Francisco as a reporter of little acclaim working for the CALL. Yep weaves together mystery, history, and believable characters into a good story. Mark Twain, in spite of his weaknesses, is a terribly likeable character.

The story takes up during the Civil War period when some Confederate activity, or at least the rumor of it, on the West Coast was cause for much alarm (most of it unfounded). Mark Twain and a young street urchin (of royal descent) are thrown together in a quest to stop Confederate spies from perpetrating a diabolical scheme, the nature of which is unknown until the end. Mark and "your Grace" follow a trail of murders through scanty clues to save the day. However, because of Mark's yarn-spinning reputation, no one believes them.

The book is worth one's time but is not particularly memorable. It, unfortunately, stereotypes the nasty Confederates and heavenly Yankees, though not nearly as overtly as some stories. However, it should help compensate for the recent dearth in historical novels (U.S.) for young people.--M.T.


Like many an author before, Jane Yolen is called by the sea. She claims this effect stems from lifelong exposure, but judging by the perennial fascination of recorded sea lore, even we land-locked unfortunates are subject to sea magic!

In *Neptune Rising,* Yolen explores many wet avenues of intrigue with alternating poems and tales. Built on internationally reoccurring legendary creatures and traditions such as the selchie, the water sprite, Proteus (in a delightful exploration of retirement), the undine, and others, the tales, particularly, are delicious. Some too often repeated aspects of description such as: "tiny golden minnows swim in the green pools of my eyes" and "the grey webbing between his fingers pulsing strongly" irritate slightly, and some poems are ordinary in this otherwise quality collection, but Yolen respects magic without being awed by it and the reader reaps the reward. Sober black and white illustrations support the variety of the approach (even science fiction rears an acceptable head in the story called "The Corridors of the Sea"). Worthwhile!--J.F.

Coralene, Diana-Discipline, and Egbert Sharke are criminals who devise a scheme to buy a broken down summer camp deep in the Minnesota woods. Using the reputation of old Camp Nish Na Bosh Na, the Sharkes manage to attract a number of rich kids. However, they have given faulty directions in their brochure, so no one knows (after they pick up the kids up at the bus station) where the camp is located. The Sharkes are no sweethearts and treat the children terribly. The plan is to extract as much money from the parents as possible and then move up into Canada through the back woods and hold the kids for ransom. The heroine and hero of the story are Laura and Harry Lewis, niece and nephew to the former owner of the long-defunct Camp Nish Na Bosh Na. They are also sent unknowingly (they have never met their aunt) to become Sharke bait. Laura and Harry are, however, resourceful enough to plan a successful escape.

Zaring, noted for her novel, *The Return of the Dragon*, has done a good though not outstanding job on this book. It's hard to believe that all those well-to-do parents would ship their offspring off to camp without checking on things more closely, in spite of the old camp's excellent reputation. The characters are reasonably well developed and may well be the strongest feature of the novel yet for such truly despicable characters, the Sharkes escape punishment for their misdeeds, a disappointment most young readers will share with me. Zaring writes smoothly, and the plot moves quickly to maintain reader involvement.—M.T.

**Plays**

Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan*. Samuel French, Inc., 1956. $3.00 per copy. Royalty: $35.00—first performance. $25.00 each additional. 95p.

*Peter Pan* is joy, magic, a celebration of youth!

This classic fantasy in five acts traces the adventures of Wendy, John, and Michael Darling, who wake up one night to find the irresistible Peter Pan, leader of the Lost Boys, flitting about their nursery room in search of his shadow.

Peter teaches the children to fly and invites them to Never Land -- that whimsical wonderland where children never grow up.