Book Reviews

Catherine Bowles
Afton Miner
Lillian Heil
Blaine Hall
Elizabeth Wahlquist

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Bowles, Catherine; Miner, Afton; Heil, Lillian; Hall, Blaine; Wahlquist, Elizabeth; Tunnell, Mike; and Francis, Janet (1983) "Book Reviews," Children's Book and Media Review: Vol. 4 : Iss. 4 , Article 4.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol4/iss4/4
Book Reviews

Authors
Catherine Bowles, Afton Miner, Lillian Heil, Blaine Hall, Elizabeth Wahlquist, Mike Tunnell, and Janet Francis

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol4/iss4/4

One of a series of geographical books designed for young readers to become acquainted with different countries in the world, *New Zealand* treats family life, history, geography, and sports in a general way. Unfortunately, because of its simplification, the style is choppy. The sentences are short with a noun/verb construction which makes the reading monotonous.

Some facts would be more interesting and understandable if they were explained. For example, "Wild areas are called bush. Some of the plants which grow there are found nowhere else in the world." Important details are lacking—what is meant by "bush" and what plants are exclusive to New Zealand? Another is the statement, "New Zealand is a fully independent, self-governing member of the commonwealth." It is doubtful that young readers will know what the commonwealth means.

The full color photographs add much to the book but would have been more effective if there had been captions.—Catherine Bowles.


Everybody has probably been embarrassed at one time or another by a growling stomach or some other unseemly body noise. Perhaps it would help a bit to realize that even presidents, movie stars, astronauts, cowboys, ballerinas, kings, and school teachers have the same problem. It might, or might not, also help to learn that "growling stomachs" are really "growling intestines" and that the scientific word for these noises is "borborygmi."

For those of you who have ever experienced, or wondered about, coughs, sneezes, yawns, hiccups, cracking bones, bumps, gas and of course, growling stomachs, it is quite likely that you will find more than you have ever wanted to know explained in this well researched and amusingly presented book. After reading it, you will be one of the few thousand people in the world who know about synovial bubbles.

The authors encouragingly suggest that "Understanding how and why body noises happen might not make them any less embarrassing but it will certainly give you something to think and talk about."

--Afton Miner.

Denys Cayet has created a delightful animal town with a Dream Fluff Bakery that gives out free donuts, horse racing where the horses in trouble are listed (Snappy Penny—no change; Breezin’no wind; Stumblin’ Jack—stumbling), and the newstand features *Grime:* the Pig of the Year, Play Beak complete with duck pin-up, and the October issue of *Hop* with a beaming frog. Through this town goes plump Marie the Hen, who quickly picks up a trail of hungry admirers who keep echoing "lucky me" as they see the dinner possibilities. The last one, Munchandcrunch the bear, plans to eat the whole line up until he sits on some ants and breaks up his own picnic. Flashy Jake the fox, True nose the hound, and Sharp-claws the mountain lion run off in all directions and Marie gets safely home to her family thankfully crying, "Lucky, lucky me."

Cayet's intriguing animal characters and rhythmic language make delightful reading. And the humorous background scenes need to be returned to after you've read the story, e.g., the burly monkey who has smashed the "handle with care" box and turned "This side up" box upside down, the new ice cream store with 456 flavors and Grasshopper Spit that is $3.80 a quart.

*Lucky Me* is a cumulative tale that creates good listening and good looking.--Lillian Heil.


The Revolutionary War exacted great sacrifices from the American colonists in their struggle to be free of British domination. But for Blacks, even free ones like Willy Freeman, the hoped-for freedom was problematic. And without freedom papers, anyone could force you into slavery again. Yet with her father killed in the battle at Fort Griswold in Connecticut and her mother taken away captive by the British, Wilhelmina, age thirteen, masquerades as a boy and heads for New York City, then under British control, to find her mother. Beset by unexpected adventures along the way, she is taken in and given a job by Black Sam Fraunces, proprietor of the still-famous Fraunces Tavern. Willy's often frightening and disheartening efforts to find her mother and to avoid being forced into slavery make compelling reading. The Colliers have effectively used actual people and historical events to create not only an exciting but an authentic narrative of the American Revolution. And readers who like this story—and few, if any, won't—will also enjoy a companion novel, *Jump Ship to Freedom.*--Blaine Hall.
The Bumblebee Flies Anyway by Robert Cormier gets its title from the model car Barney dismantles in the neighboring junkyard and rebuilds in the hospital. It is not a car built to be driven. A bumblebee isn't supposed to fly. Its wingspread is wrong for its size and shape. But since the bumblebee does not know the laws of aerodynamics, it flies anyway. Cassie first calls the car a bumblebee.

A medical facility of some kind is the setting. The young patients have terminal illnesses and have volunteered for experiments. They are encouraged not to get close to each other, not to develop ties. But they gradually do. Barney arranges for Billy the Kidney to use Mazzo's telephone; he helps Cassie, Mazzo's twin sister, keep some touch with her brother who refuses to see her; he breaks Mazzo's shell. Barney climbs a fence for Allie Roan that he can't climb himself and sees the bumblebee for the first time. He assigns Billy and Allie to be lookouts so they'll have a part in getting the car. Barney does enter the private world of the others and is dismayed by the suffering. He cherishes the intimacies shared, though they are very painful. Barney is not resigned; he is not willing to accept death without struggling and fighting. He says that "the Bumblebee will fly for us, and we will be part of the flight because we made it possible, you and me, me by building it and you by giving me a reason to build it."

Consistent in Cormier books are their intensity, their mystery, and their explorations of the individual in society in dealing with establishments. I'm glad I have now experienced a Barney Snow as well as a Jerry Renault, and that the bumblebee can keep flying for Cormier characters and readers.--Elizabeth Wahlquist.

Shadow Dancers is the sequel to The Wolves of Aam. The story continues the adventure of Lek, a young conjuror, and his friends from another race of small, shy people called the Tiddi (Fith, Arl, Cat). Lek searches for one of the fabled Twelve Stones of the Aldar, which he is accused of stealing. He and Findral, one of the great wolves of Aam, set out to look in the Shadowlands, a dread place now but where once the Stones had been aimed. As all the companions plus the wizard Ollo come together at the fringes of the Shadowlands, they discover an evil force at work that threatens the very existence of the world, and the missing Stones (for others
have disappeared) are at the heart of the matter. (Unfortunately
the plot stumbles forward and ends too abruptly and the undeveloped
characters leave the reader detached.) Perhaps reading the
first and second books in succession might help, but even so this
is not one of the better high fantasy novels to be published in
recent years.--Mike Tunnell.

Gackenbach, Dick. Mr. Wink and His Shadow, Ned. Harper & Row, 1983.
If you've wondered why shadows often look more stretched out than
their owners, read Gackenbach's delightful fantasy Mr. Wink and His
Shadow, Ned. You'll find out that short Mr. Wink and his tall
shadow, Ned, are really two different personalities who finally
separate after a squabble over the shadow's refusal to tell where
he disappears when it rains. Unhappy alone, they humorously but
vainly try to find substitutes for each other. Traveling separately
to sunny Florida to find a shadow or one who needs a shadow, they
are reunited and agree never to be parted except on rainy days.
You'll need to see the last picture to know what shadows really do
on rainy days.

At first Gackenbach's pictures make the shadow look accurate,
but as the shadow's personality develops so does his image and he
begins to dance and play when Mr. Wink is trying to read; or one
hand is in the wrong position when he frightens Mr. Wink in the
middle of an ice box raid. By the time the two confront each other
in an argument the reader is ready to accept the shadow as another
person, but is happy to see the two opposite personalities get
back together at the end of the story.--Lillian Heil.

Girard, Linda. You Were Born On Your Very First Birthday. Albert
unpaged.
You Were Born On Your Very First Birthday is a sex education book
told from the baby's point of view—had he grew and developed, what
he could do, feel and hear. The book shows a mother and father in
loving anticipation of the new baby who is born when "something inside
you knew you were ready. Your eyes were ready to see. Your voice
was ready to grunt, or howl or coo. Your stomach was ready for some
new food."

The illustrations by Christa Keiffer are nicely done showing
clearly the development and birth of the baby as the author
explains that the baby could suck his thumb, feel his mother's
heart beat, and hear things "rattle or roar" as his mother walked
down the street. Girard also describes how the mother's talking
would sound "watery and hummy" to her baby. She develops
anticipated of the coming birthday by telling how cramped and warm the baby gets as he grows bigger and begins to want something but he doesn't know what.

Finally, labor pains are called "giant hugs," obviously from the baby's point of view and though it is a "very tight squeeze" a new baby is born to parents who are delighted at his arrival.--Lillian Heil.


The youngest member (Zormla) of the family challenges mother (Empress Zurm), sister and brother (Warlords of Troon) to a battle. Using one-eyed teddy bears, marmalade, and fruit (blazing clementines), Zormla resists all efforts to get into his fortress (of Wendi Husa) until mother brings a hot pizza out of the oven. The battle halts as they eat the pizza. The book seems crazy but the names of the weapons laser sponge (sponge), anti-sticky squad (mother with wash cloth), siege tower (wagon, broom and stool) were amusing. Some terms such as "earth's core" (for apple core), sortie and alliance appeal to older children and adults more than young children but the preposterous situation would prevent their involvement in the story. How could a mother prepare a pizza while being involved in a battle in which fruit- and marmalade-covered teddy bears are being tossed around or expensive playhouses whacked at with brooms? The elaborate costumes would need to have been prepared before the battle, requiring more planning than 5-7 year olds usually do in their play.

The most appealing thing about this story is the made-up words.--Lillian Heil.

---


Twelve-year-old Alex comes down to breakfast one morning, finds that his family has disappeared and realizes that they have probably been arrested by the soldiers. He alone had escaped because his room was hidden away beyond an old store room. Alex makes his way to Moscow to find an uncle but learns that his uncle has disappeared. Cold, tired and hungry, Alex is forced to join the "wild children"—hungry, desperate criminals living in caves, cellars, and city streets.

The author has carefully researched the Bolshevik Revolution and portrayed the closed society of Russia during the 1920's. She portrays a vivid, violent, horrifying, almost unbelievable way of life, but her story exemplifies the great tenacity of the human spirit, its struggle for a better life, and makes the reader realize that freedom is to be cherished.--Catherine Bowles.

A collection of eighteen prayers, lullabies and dream-poems for Christian people, these poems are soft, soothing, peaceful and reflective. Thirteen different poets are represented, most of whom are well-known. A compilation which will appeal to children of various ages.

The illustrations alternate color and black-and-white. The colored pictures cover two pages with a scene from the poem superimposed on it. The colors are subdued and produce a feeling of quiet and rest.—Catherine Bowles.


*How Do You Make an Elephant Float?* is a misleading title for this book of punning riddles. I thought it was a collection of tricky questions but I didn't realize they were all about food. Puns frequently make the reader groan but many of these will startle the reader into a chuckle, e.g.,

What did the little chick say when it found an orange in its nest? "Look at the orange Mama-laid!"

Why did the butcher put bells on the scale?
He wanted to jingle all the weigh.

What is the difference between a piano and a fish?
You can tune a piano but you can't tuna fish.

What did Mother say to her frightened baby, when it saw a submarine for the first time?
"Don't be afraid. It's only a can of people!"

Hopkins riddles on all kinds of food—dairy, salads, main dishes, vegetables, fruits, sweets and munchies. Teachers and parents may find Hopkins' riddles a source of amusement to share, particularly with 10 and 11 year olds. The format quickly relieves the frustration of not knowing the riddle by placing the answer at the bottom of each page of questions. The amusing black-and-white illustrations use purple backgrounds for variety and emphasis. It is indeed a book of delicious riddles.—Lillian Heil.


The seventy poems in this collection are arranged in six sections headed by one of Sandberg's definitions of poetry—deals with
(1) people and their strong feelings about war, hate, etc.,
(2) word play at its best, (3) everyday things such as money,
doors, and boxes, (4) the seasons, the harvest, etc., (5) the
sea, (6) night, stars, and moonlight.

The appeal of these poems will be to adults and this will
probably be true of this collection.

Each selection is preceded by a fine wood engraving. The
format of the book is attractive with one or two poems per
page giving a feeling of space and setting off each poem.

An index of first lines is available to aid in the location
of needed poems.--Catherine Bowles.


The Story of a Bragging Duck is as much of a bore to its readers
as the bragging duck in the story is to his barnyard friends. Too
little effort is given to developing the character of the duck and
too much time to the repetitious recital of Duck's teasing. All
the reader has to look forward to is the trouble that awaits the
duck. The story resembles a folk tale or fable but lacks the
rhythmic power of language that is part of traditional tales.
"Try to catch me if you can" does not have the appeal of

"Run, Run, Run!
Catch me if you can!
You can't catch me
I'm the Gingerbread Boy
I am! I am!"

Duck finally has to be saved from a snapping turtle and vows
never to show off again, and her animal friends cheer. Preachy
tales always seem to overlook the difficulty of changing life-
long habits and present an unrealistic picture of life to young
children. If only it were that easy! Kepes' pictures are rather
ordinary and tend towards stereotyped expressions of joy, shock
and anger.--Lillian Heil.


Amy Enfield resembles a portrait of her ancestor Lucy Griffin,
and when Amy looks at this picture she seems to feel her ancestor's
presence. During her visit at her family's homestead Amy becomes
involved in a mystery dating from the Revolutionary War. Seth
Horves, a loyalist minister is said to have stolen the Church
silver. Lucy was in love with him and wants his name cleared.
She appears to Amy and begs her to find the silver and restore
Seth to his church.
In the book we have a mixture of history, fantasy, and mystery. Do people actually appear after they die? Is it possible to find the silver after all these years? The author presents the clues in a logical fashion and makes it seem feasible that Amy could see and talk to these people who had lived many years before. The geographic and historical setting of the book adds interest and color to the story. -- Catherine Bowles.


Sam's big game hunt finally gets his family's attention—more attention than he really wanted. Everyone ignores Sam and his lion hunt, except the family cat, until he blames the lion for using his sister's paints (the lion uses his tail for a brush), for keeping him up late (the lion was practicing fierce looks in the mirror) and for his leaving the lawn unmowed (the lion liked to prowl in tall grass). A hastily convened family council cuts Sam's allowance (because meat is expensive and lions eat a lot of it). The blueberry pie he'd saved disappears (his sister through blue teeth, said the lion ate it) and his mother filled his room with plants (to make the lion more comfortable). The last straw was father's cheery offer to go to the zoo to get an animal to keep the lion company. The next morning Sam announces that the lion has gone. Life for him and his exhausted cat returns to normal with the amusing postscript that if he gets too lonesome, he can always go on another safari.

Krensky's amusingly realistic story shows the use of reverse psychology. Leigh Grant's pictures show both the real and imagined results in realistic detail, but the child looks too young to push the heavy lawn mower and too old to be involved in such extensive fantasizing.-- Lillian Heil.


In an age overshadowed by a universal fear-- nuclear destruction, perhaps those who should be most concerned about the problem are young people, for it is their future most at stake. The Bomb will give them an excellent understanding of where this ominous threat began, what has fueled its growing likelihood, and where present scientific, military and political decisions are projecting it. From the discovery of radioactivity in 1896 to Hiroshima less than fifty years later, and to the real possibility of nuclear armaments threatening the planet Earth from outer space in 1984, Lens' fact-filled account is clearly anti-bomb. He has no sympathy with the political and military arguments for building
more and more deadly offensive and defensive nuclear armaments. Indeed it is the continuing buildup by the super powers and the proliferation of nuclear capabilities by more and more small powers that are creating the fuse to blow up the planet. How can there be any argument for a race toward nuclear destruction?

Possibly because of the unavailability of information on Soviet strategies and stratagems, the United States comes out the heavy in the book. But regardless of who is fueling the race, this book can make us aware of the planetary disaster toward which the world seems to be heading and the political issues that threaten to touch it off. "'The unleashed power of the atom,' said Albert Einstein, early in the nuclear age, 'has changed everything except our way of thinking. Thus we are drifting towards a catastrophe beyond conception.'"

A chronology, a list of further readings, and an index will make this a useful resource for student research in high school libraries.--Blaine Hall.


Subtitleing her book: "Teenagers Talk About Pregnancy" was really unnecessary for Ms. McGuire. The irresponsible, short-range attitudes of fifteen young women who constitute most of the interviewees would shortly make their age and condition obvious. The author carefully screened subjects to find a broad range of responses to the problems of the unwed pregnant teenager, and all the options are explored by one or another. Even the fathers, reluctant though they seem to be involved, are described, if not named. A sort of what's-done-is-done philosophy pervades the book. The girls all pick up the pieces and go on, not much worse for the experience, but hopefully a little wiser for the next relationship and the reader feels none of it is so bad after all. At risk of assuming permanent residency in the Victorian age, I keep wondering what about the baby? Keeping the baby, putting it out for adoption and abortion are all prevented and described with additional contributions by a doctor and a social worker (whose involvement in Planned Parenthood equips her to know particularly about the problem, as well as coloring her attitude). There are no far-reaching effects mentioned—the involved babies are healthy and happy, the girls are just wiser, not sadder, and another day in the life of America's teenage sweetheart passes. Really?

The problem of teenage pregnancy is pandemic, the solutions are not easy, and the long-range results will be with us forever. Somehow, this book doesn't manage to touch any of those factors with immediacy. It does contain a list of "Important Telephone Numbers and Addresses," a brief bibliography, and an index.--Janet Francis.

Brothers watch out for one another. That's Ted and Nory Solomon's system—the Solomon system. But as close as they have been, their relationship is altered by severe family problems. Their parents are separating.

The boys leave for camp, a summer tradition, with the weight of an impending decision burdening them. Who will move out—mom or dad? Tension causes the Solomon system to falter. But when the ultimate decision threatens to split Ted and Nory, too, they pull together to bring about a more acceptable solution.

This modern problem novel for young adults deals frankly with the all-too-common societal problem of the broken home. Yet, it is unlike most stories of its kind. Naylor has not written a dismal tale. Life is portrayed as still having its joys, even amid all the sadness. In fact, there are some very funny scenarios in the book. The contrast of emotions is skillfully handled, an element of Naylor's style to be appreciated. The characters are sharply drawn—Ted, Nory, and Grandma Rose especially. The story as told by Ted, the younger of the brothers, is startling fresh yet reassuringly real. There is a multitude of modern problem novels from which to choose, but this one is definitely worth the money.—Mike Tunnell.


A string of chances brings Evie to spend her summer of growing doubts with her cousin, Donna Jean, during the birth (and death) of Donna's first child. Protected and content with the rigorous religious teachings of her kind mother and the belief underlying the weekly teachings of her minister father, Evie's 16th summer jolts her into a awareness of the outside world and exaggerates the beginning discomfort she feels around her family.

Evie finds and loses a boyfriend, loves baby Josh with all her heart only to lose him (is it to a vengeful god?) and discovers dimensions previously undreamt-of in the lives of those she loves during the eventful three months.

Naylor's depiction of character comes of age as she moves away from the supernatural genre, possibly because there is autobiographical material here. At any rate, the sure/unsure nature of religious conviction is portrayed with some honesty. There are no easy answers to hard questions, but some bridges are built and Evie is willing to grow up when the story ends.—Janet Francis.

The Church Mice in Action spins the usual adventurous tale starring Oakley’s church mice. These busy little animals prove that even late summer afternoons cannot be slept through if leaky roofs and early winters are in the ofing. When Sampson catches the eye of the parson’s visiting sister he is transformed to a show cat, and the mice cleverly make sure he wins. His success attracts catnappers and the mice go to the rescue with some hilarious chase scenes on bicycles, through a bull’s pasture and ending at a hornet’s nest. Naturally the mice outwit the thieves, escort Sampson home and give up cat shows.

Oakley’s illustrations show the detail, color and humor that would carry the story without words but the narration understates the story in humorous counterpoint to the pictures. It looks like a story for young children but the ironic adult narrative make it a book best appreciated and understood by 9-year-olds and up. It just may be an adult picture book.—Lillian Heil.


Another of Robert Newton Peck’s SOUP books emerges. The same people readers have come to know well are up to their usual shenanigans. The story primarily revolves around saving Miss Kelly, the community’s teacher, from losing her job at the hand of an uppity State Office of Education official named appropriately Dr. Elsa Pinkerton Uppit. Soup and Rob devise an ingenious plan to keep Dr. Uppit out of town. Readers will be pleased to find tough girl, Janice Riker, and Rob’s love, Norma Jean Bissell, a part of the story. As for the title, the boys do “find” an old saddle and make attempts throughout the story to begin their careers as real cowboys. Naturally they must “borrow” a horse to accomplish their goals.

Peck may well be wearing the charm of SOUP a bit thin. This book was not a sterling effort. It was not terribly funny, and the plot seemed contrived—a little too farfetched. However, lovers of Soup and Rob will still find it a welcome addition to the library shelves.—Mike Tunnell.


It is possible that twenty-first century workers will look back on today’s wages and working conditions with as much incredulity as we look back at the thirteen-hour work day, and the slightly
over $2.00 per week salary with which many nineteenth-century laborers were only too familiar?

The Mill Girls, Lucy Larcom, Harriet Hanson Robinson, and Sarah G. Bagley, worked in the New England textile mills during the exciting birth and turbulent adolescence of the Industrial Revolution. To read their stories is to learn of the dedication and sacrifices of many who worked to improve conditions for themselves and for those to follow.

Lucy worked at a time when it was considered a privilege for young farm girls to become part of a shiny, new, clean and highly touted industrial system. Girls were recruited by mill bosses who enticed them (or their parents for them) with opportunities for supervised housing, free lectures, shopping and the cash with which to do it.

Young women by the hundreds flocked to the mill towns and many gained education, independence, and feelings of self worth. The mills at that time were esteemed as exemplary in the treatment of their "operatives."

With passing years, the mill-owners became less concerned with an altruistic image and began requiring longer hours and more productivity, often at the same times the girls were receiving cuts in pay. It was during this time when unrest was fomenting that Harriet Hanson worked in the mills. Sarah Bagley was on center stage during the period when "turn-outs" or strikes were becoming common place, when the "ten-hour day" was becoming a rallying cry.

The stories of these three women form an interesting thread woven through the fabric of an early period in the history of the labor movement.--Afton Miner.


As the proud mistress of a stepdog named Gus, the reviewer could easily identify with this story. People sometimes forget that pets have feelings, too. One special thing about dogs, though: once they give their affection, they don't keep changing their minds.

Terry was delighted when her dad married Marilyn, and especially looked forward to meeting Marilyn's dog, Hoover (who picked up everything, just like a vacuum cleaner). Unfortunately, Hoover wasn't that anxious to meet Terry. He liked having Marilyn all to himself and found ways to show Terry that he wasn't too crazy about having her around.

Like many an older sibling, however, Hoover eventually discovers that joining forces is a lot more fun than open battle. When a
dog decides he loves you, the world isn't big enough to hold the assorted shoes he would like to bring you.

The story is perceptive, the illustrations fun and the book a winner—at least for those of us with stepdogs.--Afton Miner.


Fans of Alfred Slote's sports stories (*My Father The Coach* and *Hang Tough, Paul Mother*) may be surprised to know he has written three exciting books about the remarkably human Atkins Robot: *C.O.L.A.R., My Robot Body* and this one, *Omega Station,* with its clever and surprising ending. Jack Jameson and his look-alike robot Danny Ore are trying to find out why Otto Drago is kidnapping robots. They know he wants to rule the universe, but how is he using the robots? The stories are appealing because the robots are so human, but the author reminds us in humorous asides that however human they may seem, they've been programmed that way. It's a unique angle that adds interest to a well-told mystery story.--Lillian Heil.


It is a difficult task to present Alaska, the largest state in the union, in one brief book geared to a juvenile audience, but the authors have presented a well researched, updated view of this diverse and complex region. The book treats the controversial oil and gas pipelines, the problems relating to unprecedented wealth and the poverty of many of the native people, the difficulties of communication and transportation in this vast area, together with the preservation of the fragile ecosystem. The history, heritage and lifestyle are realistically treated and aid in the understanding of this state. Because the book is current, accurate and has a subject index, and a table of contents which gives an overview of the coverage of content, it will be a worthwhile addition to students studying our 49th state.

Juveniles reading this would have a few problems. Many acronyms were used and while they were explained when introduced it is difficult to remember what they stand for. A list of these acronyms with page reference at the end of the book would have been worthwhile. Russian, Eskimo, Indian and Alute words needed a pronunciation guide. The beautiful photographs which illustrate the book are not always synchronized with the text, for example, on page 151 the text tells about Alaska's most northern city, on page 152 the photograph of Ketchik is the southernmost goodsized city.
The subject of each chapter is adequately developed, but somehow the total sequential picture of Alaska seems fragmented.
--Catherine Bowles.

This is a wordless picture book about an unflappable dog whose little top knot is the only visual clue that his creator is a Japanese artist, Hideyuki Tanaka.

His three adventures with removing a soiled spot on the wash, splashing in mud puddles and playing with a balloon end up disastrously, but the happy dog is never daunted. He either solves the problem or shrugs his shoulders and starts anew.

The stories are shown in a series of four pictures on a page. His problems and joys are common ones to children and his expressions are easily understood. His unfailing optimism in the fact of frustration may be a little harder for adults to understand. For children who frequently cry only when a sympathetic person is around, this book may be the way they cheerfully accept the world. Young children who haven't learned to read will enjoy telling their way through the three adventures of *The Happy Dog*.--Lillian Heil.


Idioms can be a fun part of language, especially when these expressions come from events in the past. "Keep your shirt on" meaning "stay calm," for example, started when shirts used to shrink after washing, making it difficult for a man to fight because his shirt was too tight. So men who decided to fight took off their shirts; hence, when a man is told to keep his shirt on, he is being told to calm down. Each explanation is concisely given on one page with an accompanying illustration by Guileo Maestro frequently showing the literal meaning of the idiom in an amusing way.

A table of contents or a one page listing of all thirty idioms would enhance the use of the book.--Lillian Heil.


Scenery, climate, and natural resources vary somewhat from country to country, it is true, but it is actually the people who make a country unique. That's why Tomlin's book is so intriguing. By interviewing a very broad cross-section of French people, from a school girl to a cobbler, from a housewife to a Nobel Peace Prize winner, the author has been able to measure the heartbeat and paint a very clear picture of contemporary France.
Excellent supplementary reading for a unit on France or interesting reading on its own.--Afton Miner.

Towne, Mary. *Paul's Game*.
LC 82-72750. $13.95. 188p.
This novel starts a bit awkwardly. The author seemed to be working too hard to establish her characters. However, as the story progressed things smoothed out into a fine novel--a truly terrifying tale. The character development grew stronger and the imagery was vivid. But plot was the strongest facet of the book. I was reminded somewhat of both *Summer of Fear* (same elusive quality of fear) and *Killing Mr. Griffin* (similar strong-willed, psychotic-type villain).

Andrea and Julie accidentally discover their powers of ESP. Andrea can "send," and Julie "receive." But when Paul Deveraux, a strange new boy in school, learns of Julie's receptiveness, he suddenly develops great interest in her. Only Andrea understands the changes that occur in Julie's personality. Paul is a powerful "sender." Julie's relationship with him seems innocent enough at first, but she unwittingly begins to respond to his mental suggestions. Julie shoplifts, takes up smoking, and does other things that seem really out of character. Though she seems alarmed, Julie really appears more confused, as if she is unsure of what is going on. Andrea confronts Paul only to have her family threatened, leaving "a lump of fear stuck in her throat, like an old piece of dirty winter ice." But Paul's game is more than perverted fun. Andrea finally realizes that he has been "training" Julie for something awful. Will she be able to avert the tragedy?

I was at first concerned that Julie was too much of a zombie under Paul's control. But the author is careful to show that Julie was being manipulated at the fringes of her conscience, never pushed too far. This is a fine young adult novel of suspense.
--Mike Tunnell.

Voight, Cynthia. *A Solitary Blue*.
$10.95. 189p.
*A Solitary Blue* is not an adventure book with lots of physical action; it is an adventure book of the emotions. Cynthia Voight invites the reader to share an eleven-year-old's unconditional adoration of Melody, his beautiful, shallow, manipulative mother, and his fearful respect for the Professor, his father. But as he grows into genuine love for his father, he realizes that his mother never knew what the real treasures were. The six years from 11 to 17 are an anguished search for an identity and for some kind of tie to one or both parents. With Jeff, the reader
moves from a solitary loneliness to wounded hurt when his mother betrays the first love his life had ever known.

The Professor's friend, Brother Thomas, gently bullies the father and son into sharing their hurts, and closeness begins to grow as they slowly reach out to each other. Father and son move to an isolated cabin overlooking Chesapeake Bay where Jeff cautiously begins to make a few friends and do well academically in a new high school. Jeff's overtures of friendship with Dicey are mighty strides in becoming human. He learns Dicey's friendship is different from the trap of his mother's love.

"When she asked him to play a song while she finished, he had to strum chords for awhile and pretend to be tuning up until he settled down. He didn't want her to see how unsettled he'd been by the whole thing. How unsettled he still was. He had thought he was the fisherman, but he saw now--

She had pronged him, with a single stroke, pronged him through the heart and he was caught. Just like with Melody, caught. But this wasn't Melody, Dicey wasn't. And besides, he didn't feel pronged, he felt—overwhelmed, out of breath, breathless.

Dicey watched him, but he did not look up to meet her eyes; he had things to settle inside himself first, he thought, recognizing that he felt easy, at ease, and also alert, eager, as if he had just fought his way through some thick overgrown jungle to the ocean beaches beyond."

A Solitary Blue shows how much one child can learn even with little help from anyone and how feelings and emotions can be both incredibly fragile and incredibly strong as we reach out to love others. Voight's book is a triumph of the human spirit without making villains of those who, like Jeff's mother, never find what the real treasures of life are.—Lillian Heil.


Patricia Wrightson is the undisputed mistress of the portrayal of Australian folklore. She fleshes their characters, coats their age-old motivations with believability and peoples a workday world with non-plastic things that go bump in the night.

Possibly she is catching the outlying wave of a recent trend in juvenile literature, as she gives us old Mrs. Tucker, a woman as independent as the creatures of her land and as stubborn as the land itself, and her determined (if confused) battle with the Njimbin (an ancient gnome, survivor of the Old land) who inhabits her farm.

Mrs. Tucker walks out of the rest home (or its equivalent) where her daughter has hoped to keep her comfortable and happy, headed...
for a place in the country where she can be real again—on her own terms. With admirable cunning she makes the necessary arrangements to give all concerned the idea that she is visiting a friend; purchases what she needs to live in the country (she has, after all, done it for a good number of years) and rescues Hector from the pound to accompany her. The Njimbin, meanwhile, lives the good life and hunts mischief.

Wrightson's creatures assume life immediately upon acquaintance, and the reader has no difficulty accepting the reality of a network of interrelated and teeming life, visible or no. The implacable Njimbin plagues are as natural as the happenstance that requires mosquitoes on boats and ants at picnics, and Mrs. Tucket's understandably vengeful triumph seems only right (and quite likely impermanent).

Push this one.--Janet Francis.


"There is a glowing sunshine, cool breezes, dawns that sky rocket over distant mountains, and sunsets of splintered gold. A white half moon looks like a lamb on its back, kicking playfully at the stars. Solitary, sentinel cacti in the desert look grotesque and often whimsical. Some of the queer rock formations look like part of a world before time began, and then there is the rich greenness where irrigation has been introduced." This is just one example of Elizabeth Yates' remarkable ability to use words to paint vivid pictures, evoke deep emotions and establish moods.

Through this poetic style, Elizabeth Yates recounts the struggles of a young girl leaving her home to go to the big city to realize her dreams. Although times have changed since the late 1920's, today's career girl will share Elizabeth's experiences with love, with pen, and with pencil.

Written in diary form, Elizabeth Yates portrays a vivid picture and readers will not only feel they know her but will realize that they too, can succeed if they keep working and care enough to achieve.--Catherine Bowles.


*Up a Tree* beautifully illustrates a common plight of kittens. Without words Ed Young leads the reader into the mind of a butterfly-preoccupied kitten by making the outline of a butterfly look like a cat's face (you may have to see the title page to believe this). When the kitten chases the butterfly up a tree, his claw gets
hooked; his yowls attract a dog and people who bring ladders to help get him down. True to feline nature the kitten turns on his benefactor and the man loses his balance as he avoids the clawing, spitting cat. When people give up and leave, the kitten howls until he smells fish, climbs down himself and wanders off, tail in the air as if nothing had ever happened. A "true" cat-rescue tale.

The cat's body is done in a soft smudgy texture that makes him look like a cuddly kitten, but his face reveals that, like all cats, he is curious, funny, furious, greedy and above all independent—beholden to no one. Young knows how cats move and his pictures capture the variety of movement and graceful contortions of a playful kitten in and out of trouble. —Lillian Heil.


Ivanhoe O'Brien has mean chickens; his neighbor Aloysius McCarthy has wild cucumbers—at least that's what they accuse each other of when a hole appears in a fence between their property. Since neither will claim the fence (or responsibility for the hole), they each have to build separate fences. As the fence building competition gets hotter, the structure rises higher until both builders are forced to use hot air balloons to reach the tops of impossibly high fences. Then one morning following a soft rustling and a brisk pecking sound, the fences collapse. Amid the rubble the two neighbors decide that if the cucumbers have a trellis and the chickens have a coop, they won't need a fence.

The situation illustrates common human frailty and the author has created two different characters—thoughtful slow McCarthy, and blustery, quick acting O'Brien. The counterpoint between O'Brien who immediately screams his accusations, and McCarthy who thinks two thoughts before he says anything, provide amusement and realism to the story of why neighbors have trouble getting along.

Small's illustrations begin with the title page showing a cucumber being eyed by a chicken. He keeps cucumber vines with tightly coiled tendrils and pecking chickens constantly on display, and shows how the conflict affects the whole family. The two gigantic fences (which must be holding each other up) are marvelous, and are accompanied by concessions and money-making projects that proliferate as the two walls of wood grow higher. The differences between the two are heightened visually by making O'Brien short and round and McCarthy tall and skinny. (My one postscript is that those cucumber vines look wilder than the chickens look mean—talk about man-eating plants!) —Lillian Heil.

Zolotow fans and others will enjoy her poetic book on the four seasons starting with "Summer Is..." The soft pastel pictures by Bornstein add to the quiet, reflective mood of sights, sounds, tastes and smells all year round. She describes the interests and activities loved by children—going barefoot, cider and honey, sled and skates, pussy willows and mud on your shoes—to list only a few.

The "noun + is..." format grouped by topics like seasons works much better than a lot of "noun + is" statements at random.

A group of first graders responded with interest to the winter and spring parts (if they don't understand or like our poetry selections, we immediately see their disinterest on their faces).—Lillian Heil.

**Plays**


This version of *Tom Sawyer* starts out with a snappy scene. Jeff Thatcher is alone on stage doing battle with an imaginary foe. Tom enters and watches him—sizing up the new boy—then greets him with the challenge: "I 'low I kin lick you!" Jeff counters with: "I'd like to see you try it!" They circle each other and goad one another on until no more can be said and it is time to put their bragging to a test. Tom triumphs over Jeff in their fight, but Jeff's sister, Becky, conquers Tom without throwing any punches. She simply steals his heart.

Nine short scenes follow. Some are as lively as the first and some are not, but basically this is a creditable script of the classic novel. The lyrics are not impressive and the music was not included with the script. Neither could be too offensive because the songs seem to be quite short. The musical numbers could be eliminated without damaging the play. There are at least eight scene changes, but each location could be represented by simple portable scenery.

Junior high school students should enjoy participating in this play and presenting it to their peers or elementary school children.—Janice Card.