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Book Reviews

Authors
Marsha Broadway, Catherine Bowles, Anne E. Uhl, Linda Davis, Lillian Heil, Lovisa Lyman, Jan Addy, Thomas Hinckley, Carol V. Oaks, James Jacobs, Janice Card, and Karen Haroldsen

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol6/iss2/3
BOOK REVIEWS


Although they cannot read or play checkers, guinea pigs "growl, grunt, gurgle, purr, squeal, whistle, and squeak, squeak, squeak." With minimal text and intriguing color photographs, Bare has produced an informative and eye catching description of guinea pigs and their behavior. The vivid close-up photographs are almost like a visit to the pet shop and will delight young readers, make them smile and leave them wishing for their own guinea pigs.

With its large print and sharp photographs, this book will be an excellent read-aloud and will enhance a classroom unit on pet selection and care. The two color photographs on the book jacket will entice the shelf browser to open the cover for more.---Marsha Broadway.


When Anthony Monday and Miss Eells, the old maid librarian of the Hoosac Public Library, stumble onto J. K. Borkman's diary, it leads them on a wild adventure in the fight against the forces of evil. They must decipher the seemingly mad ravings of a lunatic to find the clues that will save the world from an apocalyptic snow storm designed to cleanse the earth.

Mr. Bellairs includes all the elements of a great adventure: frightening and unexpected events, and a climactic conclusion. Unfortunately, his colorful characters overshadow everything. They lack any credibility, undermine any suspense, and turn what might have been (albeit a bit far fetched) a readable story into an hour episode of "Scooby Doo, Where Are You?" Their cuteness and eccentricities wear thin towards the end of the first chapter and really rubs the wrong way by the end of the book. This, combined with the most incredible coincidences, made the book almost unendurable. Many children would like this book, but then many children like "Scooby Doo." I, personally, cannot recommend it for any age.---Karen Haroldsen.


Grandfather Twilight is a lullaby of ethereal pictures illustrating the gentle arrival of evening. The text of the book is sparse because few words are needed. When day is done Grandfather Twilight sets out on his walk through the woods to the sea where he releases a pearl of moon to light the darkening sky. The lovely illustrations draw the reader into the cool and beauty of the forest and sea as twilight falls.

Although the book's greatest appeal will be to the very young, any age will appreciate the elegant simplicity to be found on every page.---Janice Card.


For the adult seeking to dazzle very young children, Brown's latest compilation of activity rhymes provides sure-fire help. He whittled down a collection of 300 rhymes to 14, devised hand movements to accompany each one, and presents all--complete with those easy-to-follow movements--in this attractive and colorful volume. A perfect companion to Mother Goose for the parents of young children. And a nice addition to his earlier *Finger Rhymes*.---James Jacobs.


Drum Smith is being made the victim of his own name by Zinger Simpson, a schoolmate and soccer teammate; daily he leads a group attack on Drum's back, shouting "Beat the Drum!" on the school grounds. No one befriends Drum, but his mother gives some gentle advice about breaking through and changing Zinger's animosity into something less antagonistic. Watching Zinger's...
other activities more closely, Drum learns that he seems to be involved with a very strange-looking man who drives an old brown station wagon and appears to be doing something with Zinger around the summer homes down by Log Crescent marsh, most of them empty and being taken care of by Zinger's mother. The plot is set up thus in a tense mystery story, but is marred by the pedestrian style of writing.--Carol V. Oaks.


Books like this remind me why I continue to use children's literature in the geography classroom. My colleagues occasionally wonder that a grown man chooses to squander his scholarly resources on children's books. As well might you ask a pediatrician when he's going to grow up and practice real medicine. Were I to read the Marxist 'didactic' or febrile phenomenology or any other forms of scientific humanism, would it be reality? Or were I to read current adult literature, could I argue that prurient is more real than puervile?

A case in point is *Born of the Sun*. A world-famous explorer, Karel Staszic, has found 16th century directions to the secret/sacred city of the Incas and by the time he reaches it is dying of cancer. He has been irrational the whole trip. A mule was killed by his irrationality, as was Octavian, the Indian guide. Paula, Karel's daughter, nearly dies as a result of her father's mad haste. By the time his hallucinations start, Paula can no longer understand what is happening nor will her mother in any way help her. In the remote forest east of the Andes, in sight of the ancient ruins and a village, Karel becomes comatose.

As a scholar, what do I do when Octavian's son suggests that the patron be taken to the Kallawayas--the healers: do I dismiss this as superstition or fantasy? How do I handle Ross Salmon's anthropological study of the Kallawayas (*My Quest for El Dorado*)? Do I insist, with Finn, the young expedition photographer, 'What about civilisation? Science? Reason? Little oddments like that?... How can I bear to let that old--that old witch-doctor--hack away at his head?' Finn is referring to trepannation. I can't dismiss it because I have seen all those skulls at Smithsonian of people who recovered from this very operation (Steward says 55.6%).

What a unit I could do in grade six with teams working on history of the conquest of Peru, geography ancient and modern, anthropology of the Kallawayas, and science. And when we were done, we would spend a day on the poetry that opens each section of the book. '... The mountains rise/Stern above the clouds, making/the world beyond! A matter of faith.' In the 'real' world we do not address faith, but in the whole world (the last refuge from the mad world of sickos and hijackers and terrorists), the world of children's literature, we cope by reading the only good books left, the only books that engage heart and mind, and their union--soul.--Thomas Hinckley.


Perhaps no contemporary author has such a panoply of artistic skills as Dickinson, who wields them with panache. He comes up with such contrasting and interesting stories that you wonder how one man can be so diverse as to live in the worlds of *Tulku*, of *Emma Tupper*, and of *The Seventh Raven*. In addition, his use of language is unmatched. Consider, for instance, the narrative of the Babylonian drill sergeant in *City of Gold*. When you see Dickinson's array of techniques, it becomes apparent why he never writes sequels.

In *Healer*, there is the fascinating dialogue between sixteen-year-old Barry and his inner alter-ego, Bear, a wild and unpredictable animal always ready to lash out in fear and pain. Pinkie Proudfoot, age ten, a myopic mouse of a girl, has the gift of healing. Barry has become her protector--often against Pinkie's mother. When Pinkie's new stepfather, Mr. Freeman, sets up a clinic to use her powers, Pinkie's grandfather enlists Barry's help to 'rescue' her.
Here Dickinson uses a new technique to heighten the conflict between Barry and Mr. Freeman. Barry is the skeptic, but even he has to admit that Pinkie has cured his migraines in the past. Mr. Freeman is both dynamic and sincere right to the end of the story. Thus the reader is confronted with the dilemma of resolving Barry's certainty that Freeman is a charlatan with Freeman's convincing sincerity, which comes through clearly even with Barry narrating. Dickinson dumps this paradox in the reader's lap and says, in effect, 'Interesting problem. What do you make of it?'

This story is so well written and so thought-provoking that I have read it twice.--Thomas Hinckley.


One summer night on a Long Island Beach, Nita and her friend Kit go for a late walk on the water—not along the water, but *on* the water. It doesn't seem all that strange when you realize that both Nita and Kit are apprentice wizards. Two months previously, Nita stumbled over a book in the library entitled *So You Want to Be a Wizard*. She and Kit followed the instructions in the book, and all sorts of wonderful things began to happen. Dogs start to talk, rocks get upset, Kit learns to teleport, and Nita learns to heal. But on this night, Nita is nudged by a dolphin, and a new adventure begins. The dolphin--Hotshot--takes Nita and Kit to S'reee, a wizard whale who has been attacked by a whaling ship and sharks. Nita must use her healing powers to save S'reee, for S'reee must convene the Song of the Twelve--and she is the only wizard who can send out the calls. The Song of the Twelve is a re-enactment of a song used in centuries past to bind the Lone One--Evil Incarnate. Nita and Kit are needed to help with the Song, but first must become whales themselves.

*Deep Wizardry* is the sequel to *So You Want to Be a Wizard*. Both stand well as stories on their own. Nita and Kit, though young, are concerned with the state of the world, and as a result, are believable in their attempts to save it.

Duane weaves her spells well—through language, characterization and story line. As Nita accepts the role of the Silent One in the Song, she realizes that an Ultimate Sacrifice must be made. But as a thirteen-year-old, she is still selfish enough to want to back out. Readers both young and old will be caught up in the fantasy that *Deep Wizardry* creates.--Jan Addy.


Lara and her twin brother Barnaby, along with their adopted cousin William, pass through a mysterious turnstile that takes them to another world. There they find a world ruled by a wicked king who seeks to destroy them because they are, in truth, the long lost heirs to the throne, taken from that world in order to preserve their lives. In their adventures they meet wizards, flying snakes, and all types of talking animals.

Allan Eckert is obviously well acquainted with the tales of Narnia by C.S. Lewis. His book has many of the same elements. They enter into a new world where their coming has been foretold for many years, they aid in overcoming the evil forces in control, and become rulers of the land where they grow to adulthood. Upon returning to their own world, they become little children again and discover that no time has elapsed since their departure.

Despite the lack of originality, I quite enjoyed this book. The book ends with an allusion to a forthcoming sequel. I have to admit that I am looking forward to finding out how the children are able to return to their magical kingdom.--Karen Haroldsen.

"I used to think I was crazy. ... I don't usually bother trying to explain myself. What's the use?"

But Desiree manages to explain herself very well in this, reliving her sixteenth summer. Desiree is more angry than crazy—angry at her middle-class father, her hated stepmother, and the rules and mores that curb her rebellious spirit. Her sixteenth summer she goes to Beechwater to spend the summer with her Aunt Frieda and cousin Peggy while her father and new stepmother go off on an extended honeymoon.

In Beechwater, Desiree meets Billy, the younger brother of the leader of a group known as the Outlaws. Billy is angry as well, but his anger takes on a more violent form—he is not above picking fights to cool his ire. Desiree is accepted for herself by the gang, and finally feels that for the first time in her life, she belongs to a family—the Outlaws. But the summer ends, and Desiree must grow up. "I thought we had everything and always would. But somewhere along the line we lost the script and flubbed our lines, and I learned that to some stories there can be no sequel."

Forshay-Lunsford portrays powerfully the desperate search for acceptance that all teenagers undergo. Even though the gang sounds happy when they are together, there is an undertone that ripples the 'cool' facade. The story doesn't end the way you would expect, but instead with an acceptance that life does go on, even if it isn't the way you want it to, or expect. Teenagers will be able to see themselves or their friends in *Walk Through Cold Fire*.—Jan Addy.


Michael Hague has chosen to illustrate another Grahame book, this time *The Reluctant Dragon*. In a nuclear age this seems a timely story. In an age of dragons spoiling for fights, it is useful to remember their ancestor who out-brains the foe rather than out-brawning them—or was it the boy?

The illustrations, for the most part, are as piquant as English mustard, but unfortunately the dragon misses the mark. As my nine-year-old friend said, 'When you read me the story, the picture of the dragon in the book isn't like the picture in my head'. Which is a pity.—Thomas Hinckley


Previously published in 1962, with a second smaller edition in 1968; *The Big Green Book* has now appeared again in its larger size, and I, for one, welcome it with a big smile and a cheer. (I can't figure out why the original and previous editions were so small.) The pictures are at Sendak's delicious best, and the story—well, let's just begin it and you can guess the ending! Long time ago a little boy named Jack lived with his uncle and his aunt and a big dog who used to chase rabbits (but now has run away from them!). One day Jack found a big green book hidden under an old sack in a corner of the attic. He was very bored with life that day, and hoped that this old book might be full of stories—but he was wrong. It was even better: it was full of magic spells! What Jack did with his studies in magic caused much funny befuddlement and no more rabbit pie. Read it and see!—Carol V. Oaks.


For a successful versified alphabet book, there are two requirements that are often overlooked. If the letters are to be names, it is necessary to work out x, y, and z carefully. You really can't have names all the way and then break into 'X marks the spot' at X. Xopher would be a
remarkable boy bear's name, and Xanthe would be an elegant girl bear. Let them play the xylophone in the xyst.

The second requirement is that the verse must be metrical and not break into prose. Ever since Lewis Carroll demonstrated that he could write pure piffle while maintaining technically impeccable form, it has been incumbent on all who follow to at least be mechanically correct.

"Q is for Quimbly, a soft quilted bear
Who was sewn by hand with much love and care."

The second line, being neither dactylic nor iambic, is mere prose. Verse must preserve the established rhythm:

Q is for Quimbly, a soft quilted bear.
Stitchery covers the shortage of hair.

Given the superlative illustrations, this could have been a charming book were it not for the crippled verse.--Thomas Hinckley.


At last a Syd Hoff book that isn't a variation on *Danny and the Dinosaur!* The Hoff aficionado will find everything he likes here: full-color illustrations of animals and their people, along with puns, jokes, riddles, and cartoons in what the jacket calls a "hilarious one-of-a-kind zoo."

For those who have never been particularly fond of Hoff, *Animal Jokes* will not change their opinion.--Lovisa Lyman.


This wee book was written by the great actress Dame Celia Johnson for her grandchildren, and has been published posthumously.

I like new kinds of people, imaginatively invented. Here we meet the mini-people--long and thin and colourless--like transparent licorice stocks. The General and his platoon are in the Brigade of Underworld Guards. 'But we don't guard the Gates of Hell... Our job is to protect everything that goes on underground--pipes, passages, energy supplies, sewers and so on. The lamp posts are our sentry boxes...'. The story opens as Mary and her brothers and sister are frantically looking for their dog who, they discover later, has been borrowed by the General to pursue the marauders.

Thus begins a fast-moving adventure that is both exciting and interesting. It would be fun to read this out loud, as the actress/author certainly understands good dialogue.--Thomas Hinckley.


A girl who is now old enough to walk to school without a parent approaches her daily journey with understandable caution. Although she lives in a city, she encounters all kinds of wild animals hidden in the shadows, bushes, flower beds, and even in the store windows along the route she follows to class. The animals are so well camouflaged only the sharp-eyed reader will be able to spot them. Hunting for the 36 animals is a challenging adventure for the young reader, who is helped in the search by small pictures of each species included by Jonas at the back of the book.

--James Jacobs.


After being thoroughly delighted with the third King-Smith book dealing with animals, I have been trying to analyze what makes them so good. My conclusions are first that he does a superb
job of personifying animals. The reader feels that he knows the way the animal thinks, talks, looks, walks, and acts.

Second, he somehow intensifies the animals by the human characteristics he gives to them. Fly, the sheepdog in *Babe*, is more of a sheepdog because the reader knows how she talks to sheep. Her rude, bossy behavior and words fit exactly with the sharp, staccato barks of a collie herding a flock. Making the sheep smarter and resentful of the domineering sheepdogs makes their milling bleating behavior more understandable. Making the little orphan pig smart, bright, curious and trusting fits with the widespread information about pigs being the most intelligent of animals—far surpassing the dog.

Third, the dialogue fits perfectly with each kind of animal. The sheep always stutter on a's (ma-a-a-ners, or ma-a-a-ster) so that the reader can imagine that their bleating is actually talking. Babe is soft spoken and polite to everyone, as befits a young intelligent pig. Fly is practical, warm, sensible, and loyal just as us Lassie lovers have grown to believe all collies are.

Fourth, the people don't ever overshadow the animals. King-Smith makes them eccentric but lovable, as Mrs. Hoggett who never stops talking, and Farmer Hoggett who never wastes words. King-Smith makes them alive and vivid at the same time as keeping them in their roles as supporting actors to Fly and Babe.

Fifth, he uses animals to show how blind people are to each other. The sheepdog can't believe that sheep are intelligent even though she's forced to be polite to them to get information she needs to help her adopted pig, Babe.

"I've a little problem, ' and she (Fly) explained it, speaking slowly and carefully (for sheep are stupid, she said to herself, nobody will ever persuade me otherwise)." The hilarious part, of course, is when the sheep answer. "Password, password, Paaassword!' said many voices now, speaking slowly and carefully (for wolves [the sheep's term for sheepdogs] are stupid, they said to themselves, nobody will ever persuade us otherwise)." The reader sees a graphic example of what happens in communication all the time, but while we're laughing we realize we are laughing at ourselves.

So the end result is that King-Smith can spin a dramatic and believable tale, and make us laugh as we see ourselves mirrored in the lively antics of animals.--Lillian Heil.


Cauley is such a superb artist that she carries this story with about half of the artwork in black-and-white pictures that are as good and sometimes better than the coloured ones. Her elephant images range from vignettes to full paintings. In an age of smear-and-smudge illustration, here is art with precise line-work: her elephant hide is so well done that I want to touch it (like I did at the circus, once). Her anatomical detail is impeccable. This is a real crocodile (narrow snout, if you please), complete with those interesting gussets in the corners of the mouth—and tears. But best of all is the imagination that allows her to put the animals in near-human poses so convincingly that the reader wonders if Cauley were not an eyewitness to these 'High and Far-Off Times'.

But if the art is tempting, wait until you pair it with Kipling's story. When my then-nine-year-old asked the ninety-third question, I replied (with an allusion that would not be lost), 'You're as bad as the insatiable elephant's child'. He patiently corrected, 'It's "satiable", dad'. (Wide-eyed): 'You sure?' Nod. That day I discovered that *Just So Stories* were also for adults. Cauley's skill is demonstrated by how well she serves Kipling without ever obtruding on his story. Even the Rhode Island School of Design cannot account for all that.--Thomas Hinckley

Those of us who can't resist skimming through Dear Abby's advice to her readers will enjoy Margaret Legum's Mama Quail, the witty and wise dispenser of wisdom to the animal kingdom. Mama Quail is chosen to write the new "Creatures Column" for the Weekly Territorial because her letter of advice to the Japanese Penguin (in need of gainful employment) is the answer to his problem. She told him he could sell ice to Eskimos if he really tried and he did--by selling slushies and slurpies with names like Sooshie Vanilla with Cherry Blossom Topping (delicate flavor) and Chocolate Chip Kabooky Cookie with Marshmallow Face (ladies like this).

Middle graders and up will chuckle at the heartsick lion family in Kenya. They thought their son would go to the big city and become a lion backer for the Sittsburg Peelers. Instead he had his mane plaited and corn-rowed, and changed his name to Beau (Bo Derek hairdo--get it?). Now he spends his time waiting for photographers to seek him out (which they do). Line drawings by Robert Shetterly add to the amusement.

Mama Quail's answers won't disappoint you either. She is practical, funny and aware of current events--obviously a born advice giver. She is so convincing that one fourth grade listener asked if her address at the end were real.

Mama Quail
Creatures Column
Weekly Territorial
Southwest, World 123ABC

I agree with my 9 year old friend. I wish M.Q. were real.--Lillian Heil.


It was bad, even the first summer. Everything changed for Jeremy and all of his family. It came with the first hint of his father's illness, his stay in the hospital for tests, the discovery that he had cancer, and that it was "too late". Grief, fright and pain visited them again and again, but there were some times that compensated a little. For Jeremy, it was a wonderful evening when, very late and in the cold, he and his Dad saw two great owls briefly alight in the tree outside the cabin at the lake. It was the kind of experience neither one would ever forget. There were their hours of poring over his father's bird books and talking about the birds. There was the gift at Christmas of the little carved owl, found for him by his father on an exhausting shopping trip . . . and the exchange of love that accompanied it. There was the arrival of the little Siamese kitten, Blue. And when his father was gone, there was a slowly developing friendship with Tess, whom his father had been unsuccessful at persuading him to befriend, because she was thin and lonely and forbidding in manner. During the year following his father's death, Jeremy learned more about life and the courage it took, but also about the peace that sharing love can bring. A sensitive, honest story of grief and growth.--Carol Oaks.


A book of Thanksgiving poetry has identity. We know what it is, where it belongs, and when to use it. Such predictability is a comfort to the adult who can depend upon a book so cleanly defined in its title. So how does this slim volume differ from other useful Thanksgiving books? It stands out in two ways:

Variety. These sixteen poems are wonderfully balanced in form, focus, and feeling. From the contemporary humor of Kaye Starbird to the millenia-old dignity of Psalms, a spectrum of Thanksgiving is represented which should find every reader somewhere in its sweep.
While Gammell's haunting watercolors seem just right to underscore the serious poems, he lightens the mood for the lighter verse—all the way to line drawings in one case. And the two-color art, blue and orange, links summer and fall as does the holiday. A quiet, solid celebration of perhaps the most American of all holidays, this colorful collection is clearly a cut above the norm.—James Jacobs.


Using some of the experiences which were her own as an immigrant from China, Bette Bao Lord has created a lively and warm story of young Bandit, or Sixth Cousin, a member of a large and happy Chinese family, whose father had gone to America. When Bandit's father writes his father for permission to stay in America and to have his wife and little daughter join him, Bandit is both frightened and excited. She chooses herself an American name, and is given it to keep by her family; henceforth she will be known as Shirley Temple Wong. The adventures of Shirley Temple Wong in trying to learn English, read English, understand a completely different environment, and make at least one friend are not depressing, but are real, and young readers will rejoice when she does find a friend, does learn to play baseball and thus win a lot of friends, and learns that she can follow the exploits of the Dodgers and Jackie Robinson on the radio. He becomes a great hero to her—and to all her schoolmates, and eventually adds a new dimension to her experience. This one will be popular with youngsters.—Carol V. Oaks.


A friend said recently that in children's literature, a good story is paramount. I argued that how the story is told is more important; that the language must be on the cutting edge of ambiguity (capable of more than one meaning). That which can only apply to the story and not to our lives is trite and banal. Competent authors know that even the 'new' realism cannot lapse into commonplace (banal) language.

Tell me that you have a 'smashing' story in which a girl—sensitive—goes to a boy-witch and makes a 'changeover' in order to save her baby brother who is being consumed by an evil, leeching lemur—and I will tell you I am not interested—and it's not because I do not believe in witches. But now let me show what does grab me:

'Laura was alone with the day. It panted at her with a stale sweetness on its breath...'

'. . . tiger burning bright, and you shall enter the forests of the night.' (Is this trite?)

'. . . could make figures behave themselves and give up their hidden secrets.'

'. . . fossils of pain laid down in the mixed-up strata of memory.'

'Canadians are Americans with no Disneyland.'

'. . . lightning wrote... in an instantaneous scribble of power... electrical graffiti.'
'Thunder munched around the edge of a clouded sky.'

'The hospital lay, like an island of concrete cliffs . . . '

Would this be the same story if the 'thunder rumbled across the valley' or the hospital 'loomed up'? Will my thunder ever be the same again? The real advantage of 'literature' is that we see as we have not seen and experience what we have not before experienced. Fine stories serve up even stale Thursdays in luminous language.

In the long section on Laura's changeover from a sensitive to a witch, I had a mystical experience akin to a fine performance of 'The Magic Flute' or one of my own rites of passage. In the past fear-smeared week of pain, this book brought me both submission and release.

Those suffering from the censorship syndrome will zero in on incidents and demand excision of the SExplicit, while if they would read on they would discover that Laura will not likely turn to sex for escape; she has learned that love is not less. Sorenson, the unfeeling witch, will likely learn both love and control. He, after all, leads Laura in a long discussion of power without compulsory means. Good writers give us new contexts in which to examine the soul's paralysis. They snare us from the spectator sidelines to make us fellow peripatetics. They give us more than just story; they urge us through new mazes that we may better thread the labyrinths by which we are taught mortality.

It should not be a surprise that this is the recently announced 1984 Carnegie Medal winner.

--Thomas Hinckley.


Hated and abused for his talent of waterdivining in an already waterlogged village, Viner leaves to seek the mythical land of drought. There he is hailed as a hero and the prospective husband of the future queen, the infant Dark Cloud. However, he also meets his counterpart the Rain King, Morning Light. Just as Viner was perceived to "bring" water to his water-beleaguered village, Morning Light's rain dancing "brings" sun to his drought-stricken land. Unattracted by the idea of marrying a baby, Viner is persuaded to accompany Morning Light, who decides to leave when the queen abandons him. Using Dark Cloud as a hostage for Morning Light's good behavior, Viner returns to his village where he assumes the role of savior as he forces Morning Light to dance and save the village from the continual rain.

This strange book has a dark tone and its central concern is primitive beliefs, superstitions, and rituals, and their effect on the lives of individuals. Viner is not exactly a sympathetic character, but he is certainly unusual. His search for acceptance and fame, which he abandons in favor of hometown praise, presents a valid statement about the human desire for hometown recognition. Nevertheless, the plot of the novel and particularly its resolution is bizarre. The novel will probably not appeal to the majority of high school students because the entire effect is repellent and reeks of "man's inhumanity to man." Viner has imposed a destiny on his friend that he personally rejected. A very few might enjoy the historical fantasy, but he or she will be the exceptional high school student.--Linda Davis.


Kira's skill and experience as a exo-communications specialist had been developed at the expense of more general knowledge and the friendship and respect of her peers. Orphaned at sixteen by the sudden death of her parents, she was left isolated and alienated from everyone except Arreglon, a refugee Thagnian. Assigned to a cadet landing team, Kira is rejected by the other members. However, as the only communications specialist on station, Kira becomes the
translator for the powerful Vallusians when the Arraveseans crash. Moreover, it is Kira who solves the mystery of the moving meteorites and saves her landing team from death at the hands of the Danads. Her successes bring her the friendship and respect of her peers and the rest of the station's personnel, but the price, the betrayal of Arreglon's friendship, is hard for Kira to accept.

Anne Mason, in this first novel, has succeeded in creating a believable, complex setting, plot and characters which capture the imagination of the reader. The character of Kira is sensitively and well drawn with all the complexities of adolescent seekings for identity, for friendship, for acceptance and for respect. Further, through Kira understanding and beginning to overcome her dislike of Vallusians, the novel demonstrates implicitly the need to examine our personal prejudices in order to grow. While it has a happy ending, the novel is realistic in its presentation of life as a mixture of good and bad. Both junior and senior high school students would enjoy this original and fascinating story.—Linda Davis.


Being seven feet tall, well-educated and skilled in farming would have been fine if Grittel had been a son, but when she refuses to marry an unpleasant widower with nine unruly children, Grittel's mother kicks her out. On the road, magical adventures seem to gravitate to Grittel. She defeats an evil demon, Azatoth, and his master; kills a witch who is about to cook a child; and directs the destruction of the direwolves of Clyverrin. Moving into the uplands, Grittel finds a spaceship which had been drawn to the planet by some unknown force. In an attempt to help, Grittel's new skills backfire and a crew member's head becomes invisible. Seeking the source of power that drew the spaceship to earth, Grittel again has to face the demon Azatoth, some magical constructs, and a broken leg. A psychic appeal for aid results in Grittel being healed, accepted as an apprentice witch, and eagerly viewed as a prospective wife to either the wizard Lord Oreon or his eldest son.

The plot is unrealistic, fanciful and reminiscent of some rather gruesome fairy and folktales, but it is fast moving and exciting. Grittel, as a feminist heroine, captures the imagination and sympathies of the reader. Some might object to the magic and to the mention of castration, but many high school students will enjoy this unusual story.—Linda Davis.


What a smashing sailing book! It starts off with Pippa (Philippa), age 14; Fio (Fiona), slightly younger; and Toff (Christopher), also 14, rescuing a five-year-old boy in a little toy plastic dinghy being swept down the Exe Estuary by the fast-flowing ebb tide. But in the process, their Bermudan-rigged cutter *Winklepicker* is driven onto the Orcombe Rocks, which stave a whopping great hole in the hull.

They neatly manage a temporary repair and get the cutter to a boatyard, meet the owner Simon Dart, are dismayed that the repair cost will be 65 pounds, and ultimately all three accept jobs in the yard varnishing a Bermudan-sloop-rigged 28-footer of radically new design, which will be entered in a competition. Whilst the worst Simon expects is industrial espionage, what he consistently gets and what the teenagers become involved in is sabotage.

The outstanding part of the book is crossing the Channel to Jersey for the competition. Simon has had to fly ahead to Jersey to try to unscramble part of the sabotage. Toff and Fio are sailing *Winklepicker* and Pippa and Harry, a regular worker at the boatyard, are crewing *Paper Dart*. Pippa, having been drugged, oversleeps her watch, and on coming into the cockpit finds Harry unconscious. She handles the medical emergency, solves the navigational error caused by sabotage of the compass, and races against time to get to Jersey.
This book is excellent fiction and because of the precision with which it is written I shall use it in the classroom as non-fiction. I shall use the navigation problem to introduce dead reckoning in the navigation class I teach for ROTC. The maps will be used in the cartography classes as examples of superior map design. And the next time I teach introductory geography, I shall use this book as an example of how to build a geography unit for elementary school students. This would beat any textbook going.

Rowe's illustrations are all right on land but stunning on the sea. The little end-of-chapter sketch of Paper Dart running before the wind under spinnaker is breathtaking.

Nothing can match books produced from love of crafts--sailing, writing, illustrating. The only other teenage sailing saga even comparable was written by Arthur Ransome forty years ago.

--Thomas Hinckley.


Incognito Mosquito, Private Insective, is back again. Madame Vanderbug has invited him to her Gala Charity Benefit at the Waldorf Wasporia sponsored by Better Hives and Gardens. For entertainment, Gnat King Cole, the famed hornet player is featured with his hit song, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that sting." An article in the newspaper *Flywitness News* has alerted Vanderbug to a rash of robberies and Mosquito, attending incognito, will try to entrap any potential thieves. You can be certain he'll wing his way to a solution and zap your funny bone at the same time.

This is a spoof on the numerous solve-a-mystery series now on the market. The difference with this book is the fun and puns. Mosquito Insective relates his brilliant, fanciful solutions to puzzling cases he has been asked to solve. If you fly with Incognito you'll not only bee amazed--you'll bee itching for more.

This book is pure entertainment, full of chuckles. I admire the wit and punnery of E. A. Moss. The whimsical sketches by Don Madden are right in line with this buzzarr sense of humor. Although fun reading, it is best taken in small doses. This is one mosquito you don't want to avoid.--Anne E. Uhl.


*Beatrix Potter's Nursery Rhyme Book* is a collection of traditional rhymes, Beatrix Potter's own compositions and her adaptations of old rhymes. Included, also, are a few poems by well-known poets, such as "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" by Edward Lear. This makes the collection somewhat misleading because there is no indication which rhymes fit in each group. The publisher's note at the end is helpful but difficult to follow, and most children and adults reading to children will probably skip it.

The format is attractive and there is an illustration for almost every rhyme. The illustrations have been taken from previous works of Beatrix Potter and they do not always fit the rhyme in every detail.

This recent collection does not quite meet the excellence of the original books published by Potter.--Catherine Bowles.


Hostage scenarios are so common these days that even the smallest cartoon fan, after seeing myriad news-break interruptions, can speak intelligently about the latest crisis. Here is a book about children held hostage by members of an imaginary group in an unnamed middle eastern
country. The children have accompanied their parents to Rome where their parents will be
attending a conference on arms control. Conference participants include American congressmen
and university professors as well as representatives from many other countries. One morning all
of the children are divided among minibuses for a day-long tour. One busload, including six
Americans, four boys and two girls, never reaches the catacombs. Instead the bus is boarded by
masked men who conduct the American children by van, yacht and truck to a windy, desert bluff,
hours away from civilization.

Where are they? Who are their captors? What are their demands and how is the United States
Government reacting? Little by little the children discover partial answers to these questions.
Most discouraging of their discoveries is that their captors' demands are irrational to the extreme:
complete disarmament or the children will not be returned. The children realize that their country
will never comply. If they want to be free, they will have to help themselves. They begin to
record their observations and any clues that might pinpoint their location. In the process the
captives learn to care for one another and even for some of their captors. Though the method their
abductors have used is never acceptable, the reason behind their action becomes more
understandable. Other countries have a right to control their own futures and not to live in fear
that one of the major powers will annihilate them on a whim.

The point of view is a little jarring. Most of the story is told by two characters whose
thoughts we read and whose observations we see. The first is one of the oldest hostages and the
second the youngest. We also have a chance to observe these children's parents and see into their
thoughts. One wonders if Rardin planned to give a more in-depth account of all of the families and
hostages à la popular disaster-movie mode and ran out of time, or if she deliberately chose
representatives from two age groups to interest readers in both the younger and older ranges of her
audience.

Be this as it may, the ways the children take responsibility for their own rescue and the steps
they take toward maturity are believable. Two brothers, the only siblings in the group, come to
terms with their own brotherhood and take significant steps toward understanding the brotherhood
of mankind. The youngest captive comes to terms with the disintegration of his parents' marriage.
All come to better understand the motivation of their captors.--Lovisa Lyman.


Greta Janssen meets Wing, a Chinese-American boy, while riding on the trolley cars in San
Francisco. Wing takes his grandfather's dinner to him every evening, because Old Man does not
like hospital food. She becomes fascinated with the Chinese culture and way of life--especially
with Old Man, whom she is never permitted to see. Old Man becomes the pivot around which her
relationships with her therapist, the other girls in the shelter and her views of the 'real world'
swing.

Greta must deal with three 'old men' in this story--'old man' Hackey, who runs a stable of
girls, including Greta's mother; Old Man (Wing's grandfather) who rules his family with an iron
will from his hospital bed; and This Old Man, the universal game that children of all backgrounds
play, as Greta finds out. "Two little girls sat on the marble steps of an apartment building rolling
their hands and singing some song in Chinese that sounded familiar, but I was too upset to pin it
down."

Greta is rarely upset--she is a self-assured sixteen-year-old living in a shelter home to protect
her from her mother's 'old man' who wants to add her to his group. Sometimes, though, life in
the shelter home is more adventuresome than living at home would be.

Ruby writes powerfully, showing Greta's frustration with Wing and his blind acceptance of
the old Chinese way of life. "His way? His way? You're a turtle, Wing, you know that? You
crawl toward him and let him beat you with a stick, and you pull your head back into your shell,
and you keep going back for more. Well, I don't need that from him, and I don't need a turtle for a friend either."

Ruby's characters are believable--even those who flit in and out of Greta's life. The story moves well, with reality firmly in focus. This is a good book for the teenager interested in trying to understand different cultures, as well as his own world.--Jan Addy.


Folklorist Schwartz collects tales and sayings from the oral tradition, and then makes them permanent in print. These 28 haunting stories have been told around campfires and in darkened cabins for more years than anyone really knows. Some are spooky. Some play a joke on the listeners. Some are grisly. All are short. For those whose taste includes a good ghost story, this is a fine collection--and a good companion to the first volume called *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*.--James Jacobs.


"Million," "billion," and "trillion" are hard enough for adults to fathom, but the amounts they represent are particularly difficult for children to comprehend. In this picture book, Schwartz uses four methods of measurement to show how much those numbers stand for: height (kids standing on each other's shoulders), volume (water), objects (tiny stars on paper), and time (how long needed to count to each number). For instance, we can count to a million in about 23 days. A billion would keep us busy for 95 years. And to reach a trillion, we would need to call numbers for almost 200,000 years. A note from the author tells how all the calculations were made, and in that explanation readers are provided with means to ask their own questions about large numbers.

--James Jacobs.


When Maeve's young brother is killed by a British soldier, she wants to kill the noseless soldier who shot him. This story takes place in Belfast during the time of the Irish hunger strikers about ten years ago. It tells of what the war does to the children. In ancient times children were offered as blood sacrifices and indirectly this practice goes on today.

I have mixed feelings about this book. The story alone is very gripping but it is told in such a matter-of-fact way that it reads like a case study. We are told what Maeve thinks and feels but we never truly feel with her. We can sense her confusion but her emotions change so quickly and with so little warning that she is difficult to keep up with. It does occur to me that the author intended it to be this way. Part of the horror of the story lies in its matter-of-factness. But she either needed to be completely matter-of-fact or spend more time developing the characters and setting the stage. As it is, it is caught between two worlds.

Ms. Sullivan actually visited with the children of Belfast and includes incidents they related to her. These are things that really happened and are still happening. I would give it a reserved recommendation. It is a story that needs to be told. I just wish it had been told a little better.

--Karen Haroldsen.


Van Allsburg caught the attention of the children's book world with his Caldecott Honor Book *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* in 1979. The stunning black-and-white art turned heads both young and old, and he followed with other visual treats which were received with the same enthusiasm.
The stories, always offering a touch of mystery, tended to be overshadowed by the splendid drawings. They were not faulty; they simply were not at the same level of his art. No longer.

Both the text and the drawings in *The Polar Express* are absolutely first rate.

The idea is not new. A hopeful child waiting for Santa on Christmas Eve gets to travel to the North Pole for a first-hand look at Santa's world. But Van Allsburg's fleshing out of the story is unique and fresh. The boy is whisked to the North Pole by a steam locomotive pulling cars filled with children in their pajamas, and all get to witness the official beginning of Christmas when Santa picks one child to receive the first gift of the season. The streets are full of elves and onlookers whose cheers congratulate the child, welcome Christmas itself, and accompany Santa on his journey. The magic of the tale lies in the gift the boy receives, and how it symbolizes the Christmas spirit of the true believer.

A wonderful read-aloud, this reassuring story has such detail in the text, power in the art, and dignity in the experience it is miles removed from the usual story of happy elves hammering out presents for the world's children. Clearly this season's finest Christmas book, *The Polar Express* is also one of the best of all time. *The Polar Express* should find hearts and readers for decades to come.--James Jacobs.


Described on the dust cover as "unsentimental" and "honest" this latest in the "Creatures of the Wild" series is informative, factual, and filled with concrete detail about the life of a tawny owl. The book follows Kiou and his sister Witt from the egg stage to maturity, describing how they learn to fend for themselves and finally establish their own territories away from their parents. Illustrations in mellow, unobtrusive tones are not romanticized, as befits the text. All in all it should be a highly recommended picture book.

The problem is that the book is not interesting to the lower range of picture book fans. Even five-year-olds would become quickly bored. Young readers might enjoy the book more than nonreaders though some of the vocabulary could prove difficult. For the older reader with a report assignment on owls, it could be a real find.--Lovisa Lyman.


To complete her degree in psychiatry, Claudine Vegh chose to interview 28 survivors of the Holocaust who were children during World War II and lost at least one parent in Hitler's concentration camps. Some were the only members of their families who escaped. Those interviewed were "people who have all the appearances of being unquestionably integrated, both socially and physically, people about whom it is said: 'They have every reason to be happy.'" They had never before spoken about their experiences, and consented now to tell their stories partly because Vegh herself lost a father to the Nazis and partly because "I needed to talk about it...at least once in my lifetime."

The stories of events 35 years ago are as compelling as I expected, but left me even sadder than I anticipated. The clear voices of those who lived in a world of uncertainty and terror ring loudly through the reader, and their tales are direct, sparse, and unforgettable. Since these are all survivors, the details of man's inhumanity to man are missing, but the great struggles for a solid life are not. I do not think I will read the book again; I would not have missed the one time through. Translated from French, some terms and colloquialisms are British English but are not confusing to the American readers.--James Jacobs.

Winthrop weaves a fine fantasy tale centering upon a centuries-old wooden model of a medieval castle. A gift to young William, it provides him with a reason and the means to travel from his contemporary home to the days of knights, dragons, and an evil wizard who rules ruthlessly—and also holds the key to William’s happiness in the modern world.

The particulars of the plot are imaginative and pleasing. Winthrop has invented new twists to a tale of time-travel fantasy, and most are highly successful. Only the battle with the wizard and some of the dialogue seem a little wooden, but not enough to detract seriously from a satisfying story. --James Jacobs.


The old English verses of "The Bells of London" are used to tell another story in this picture book. The story begins at the "... bells of St. Clement's..." with a little girl selling her beloved pet dove. Unable to part with the bird, she follows the little boy who buys it. She tries to steal the bird back but only manages to set it free. She and the boy race around London and finally catch the bird only to, again, set it free. In chasing the bird, they pass all the different bells in the old English verse.

The illustrations are fabulous. They are very reminiscent of the time period which they portray. They are bright and vibrant and, despite the colors, are similar to old English woodcuts in style with everything being heavily outlined in black. I would recommend this book highly. --Karen Haroldsen.


*Whose Baby?* by Masayuki Yabuuchi looks like a beautifully illustrated picture book for very young children, with a cover showing a solicitous mother penguin bending down to look at the fuzzy baby peering out from between her legs. However, once inside, the format changes and the reader is shown a baby animal and asked to identify the parent. The fawn, the fox, the seal and the lion were easy but I missed the peacock and the bison. And I didn't know the correct terms for male and female of the species.

It's nicely done. I look forward to seeing the three other books *Animal Mothers, Animals Sleeping* and *Whose Footprints?* by the same author/illustrator. --Lillian Heil.