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Book Reviews

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Ancona's book about sheep poses the problem of what to do about sheep predators and proposes a possible ecological solution that avoids the use of poison (such as compound 1080 banned by the government because it killed more animals than coyotes).

After a short explanation of the kinds of herding dogs who actually move the sheep from one place to another, Ancona explains the European system for predator control--use of guard dogs. These large dogs never herd sheep; they simply protect them from the enemy, including Ancona as he photographed the herds. His picture shows the Great Pyrenees (named after the mountains in which he guards sheep) deliberately placing himself between the flock and the camera man.

Six breeds are shown and described whose similar looks support the belief that they all came from a common ancestry. To help the reader understand dogs, Ancona describes the four stages that dogs go through to become hunters or herders and then compares this to the guard dogs who do not go beyond stage two involving play with other dogs. They never play with sticks and do chasing and nipping as they would in hunting food.

In a project at Hampshire College European guard dogs are being tested with farms and ranches around the country. The last picture shows a Great Pyrenees frightening a coyote away from his herd of sheep.

Told almost like a story this is an informative and well photographed book on dogs used with sheep. The experiment with guard dogs explains an interesting and ecologically sensible solution to protecting sheep from coyotes. Because the book is short, the lack of a table of contents and page numbers is not a serious problem when locating information.--Lillian Heil


Norby is a robot, and had he written this book, it would likely have been more interesting! On the other hand, maybe he did . . . the conversation surely could have been programmed! As to plot: Norby has alien parts which make him malfunction at critical moments (as in time-travel). They also make him extremely valuable to Space Commission scientists who wish to discover the secret of his abilities. In the process of careening around the galaxy, Norby and his owner, Jeff, discover a planet with a strange attraction for Norby. Jamya is apparently inhabited by dragons, but it soon becomes evident that the planet is governed by another force--one which (are you breathless?) guards the secret of Norby's origin.
In spite of the distinguished author, Isaac Asimov, who collaborated on this book, it is stilted, simplistic and dull. Even beginning S.F. enthusiasts can find more attractive fields for exploration.--Janet Francis


In this sequel to Ratha's Creature, this clan of intelligent cats have successfully tamed the "red tongue." The Firekeepers maintain the fire for the good of the clan but gradually become haughty and proud. Ratha admits to the clan an unnamed cat who becomes known as Shongshar. Through his cunning and deceit, the Firekeepers gain control of the clan and turns the use of the fire as a tool for survival to the worship of a god. Ratha has to fight to regain control of the fire and of the clan.

This book is an interesting study in the misuse of power. It is a well written and an interesting story. The only things I found disconcerting about it were in the references to the passage of time. Often what was inferred to have happened over a long period of time, turned out to be only a few days. It also ends too tidily. One of the friends of Ratha is faced with the possibility of having to kill her own son who has sided with Shongshar. Instead of ever having to actually confront the issue, her son conveniently dies of natural causes. Despite some flaws, I found the book very enjoyable and highly recommend it.--Karen Haroldsen


Joan Blos is a wonderful writer--each word well-chosen, historical milieu well-researched. That is enough to make the book worth reading. But I would have liked a tighter plot. Sherm is a crippled teenager trying to help his family make a living on the frontier. A quarrel with his father sends him off to make it on his own. He manages to become part of a trading party into the snow-bound wilderness. His fellows leave him waiting for them in a primitive cabin but they are not able to return for him. Instead an ancient Indian woman joins him. Too strong to die, too weak to travel with her tribe, she proceeds to teach Shem enough to survive. The story reminds me of another more appealing story with a similar theme: Elizabeth George Speare's The Sign of the Beaver. --Lovisa Lyman


Until Uncle Nicky comes to visit, Weeble's biggest problem is the upcoming cheerleader tryouts. Because she never knew her father, Weeble thinks
that her uncle may fill that void. Nicky comes on to his niece, and Weeble feels both excitement and guilt. Fearing Mom's reaction, Weeble confides in her friend Robyn. Robyn suggests that Weeble ask the advice of their teacher Mr. Blair, who has begun dating Weeble's mom. After talking with Mr. Blair, Weeble tells Mom about Uncle Nicky's advances, Mom confronts Nicky, Nicky leaves, and the girls succeed at the cheerleader tryouts.

Borich's first YA novel is mediocre. The plot plods, the characters are shallow, and the dialogue drones. The blurb describes the novel as "sensitive and insightful," but neither adjective applies. The psychological and sociological conflicts of a family confronted with sexual child abuse are superficially addressed or ignored. Within a "couple of days" of Nicky's departure, the cheerleader tryouts have again become Weeble's biggest problem. The YA reader deserves more than a quick-fix resolution to the complexity of sexual abuse.

--Marsha Broadway


Lois Appleby wants to go to college. Her parents would like to see her safely married. After all what does a woman need an education for in Nebraska in 1936? With no job and no support at home, the prospects look bleak. But this is a formula story so hope is not lost. The formula works like this: Girl wants education. Girl helps friend in need--Lois' best friend's mother has a mental disorder so Lois offers to stay with her. Mother's wealthy former college buddy offers to help Lois go to school. An extra in the bargain is the very handsome son of the former college buddy. The one interesting angle in the book is the mental illness of the mother. Her particular aberration is strange enough to keep the reader hooked until she recovers. Still can I honestly say that I can forget Who Could Forget the Mayor of Lodi?--Lovisa Lyman


In the adolescent series for reluctant readers, Lippincott Page-turners, the publishers have attempted to commission well established, experienced writers to create stories that would hold the interest of readers who would rather be doing something else. The format is not insultingly simple, the books are shorter than the average young adult novel, but the print is ordinary size. The significant selling point is the high interest approach through the plot and action. In The Haunting of SafeKeep, one of this series, the employers want a couple and the kids we meet on the first page are a "couple"--a couple of broke college kids looking for summer work in San Diego. They find it as caretakers
at "SafeKeep," a partially restored historical house display. Dev and Sara share quarters but not lives until Sara's past makes her sensitive to the anguish that is haunting the cold church and gives her insight into its modern equivalent.

San Diego's ambience is evident, there is plenty of action and the characters don't splinter when they move--this one is likely to be popular.--Janet Francis

In seeking the purpose and reward of life, Henry David Thoreau walked his own simple path which circled Walden Pond, passed through a jail, and ended too soon at age 44. He was, and is, controversial, but not ignored. His two books present a vision much broader than his native Massachusetts and more timeless than the slice of 19th Century he lived.

Long a student of Thoreau (perhaps "friend" is more accurate), Burleigh's overview and skillfully chosen quotes capture in fact and feeling the essence of this complex and influential man and his times. The beauty and wonder is that Burleigh can do this so well in just 31 pages--and half of them pictures. Bloom's soft black-and-white illustrations fit the text hand-in-glove. Bibliography is appended. All in all, a delightful treat for those who already know Thoreau; a splendid introduction for those who are meeting him for the first time.--James Jacobs

Eleven-year-old Jackson and his friend Goat have taken on a frightening adult responsibility--they are trying to protect Alma, Jackson's former babysitter, from her brutal husband. Jackson's divorced parents become involved in time to save Alma and her baby's lives but not before Jackson's life is threatened and he and Goat have attempted to drive Alma to the nearby shelter for battered wives in a borrowed car.

Characters are well-developed and believable from childlike, trusting Alma to Jackson's absentee father. Comic relief is provided by Goat's clowning--most memorable of his antics is his answer to Saint Patrick's Day: a green flair pen in each nostril. Recommended for boys and girls.--Lovisa Lyman

Teenage Lily is looking for a real home, a happy place where even the donkey sings sweetly. But how can she hope to ever live anywhere but in a furnished rental? Her father has always been a poor provider. Mostly he has run
little rented stores where he sells groceries and dreams of serving tea to his customers in tiny China cups while they admire his junk collection. Her mother is waiting to be taken care of as she deserves while she doles out indigestible meals and lons for a cup of really strong coffee. Lily's younger brothers, silent Danny, who has learned to make deliveries to back doors, and curious Patrick fight constantly. When Lily's father inherits land in Florida the family finally has hope. They'll have a house of their own and take up raising peanuts. When their legacy turns out to be a tangle of brush and trees ranged around a cement foundation, father gives up after felling a single tree and rents a house and store in the dying town nearby and starts collecting junk.

Lily realized that if she ever has a home, she'll have to build it herself.

The writing is very good, better than the plot which becomes unbelievable when a town-full of teenagers manages to secretly build a house without any of their parents becoming suspicious. Still the story has a valid message—we can spend our lives blaming our parents, our hometown, our lack of education or wealth for our failures, or we can put all that aside and do something about becoming whatever it is we want to be.--Lovisa Lyman


Erskin Midgett is a sea-faring man, a fisherman, a rescuer of ship-wrecked souls. Why then does his son George fear the sea and prefer the company of a deaf-mute recluse and her pigs to man's work? Some might call George cowardly and among them would have been Erskin until George shows his mettle in an act of courage that, had it really happened, could have changed the course of the War for Independence. Edwards gives a view of the war that youngsters seldom get from history books—a time when no one was to be completely trusted, when even Washington's stoutest supporters turned against him, when starving, freezing soldiers were deserting in droves. The historical setting is well-developed and researched. The characters and conflicts are true to any time and place.--Lovisa Lyman


Jason's story of pursuing the golden fleece in order to regain his rightful throne in Iolcus is one of the oldest in Greek mythology. The adventure, the dangers, the perseverance, and the derring-do have captured audiences for centuries. Evslin simply improves upon a compelling commodity.

Evslin has a history of shaping and molding old tales with a master's touch, and *Jason and the Argonauts* is no exception. The chapters and pages fall easily
and smoothly from a mouth reading the story aloud, and the imagery paints powerful and lingering pictures for those who read it silently.

A treasure for those who do not yet know about Jason, and a first class retelling for those who want to travel again with the argonauts.--James Jacobs


Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge is a little boy with a very big name, and a heart even bigger. He and his parents live next door to an old people's home, so the folks who live there are Wilfrid Gordon's friends. His special favorite is Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper because she has four names just like he does. One day Wilfrid Gordon's parents said Miss Nancy was a "poor old thing" because she was ninety-six years old and had lost her memory. From family and friends Wilfrid Gordon learns what memory is and helps his dear friend, Nancy, to remember.

This lovely picture book was originally published in Australia. Warmth and love radiate from each page. Mem Fox tells her tale simply and sincerely, allowing readers to make discoveries on their own. Julie Vivas' unique pastel illustrations help bring to life the wonderful characters introduced ever-so-briefly in the story.

Reading this book is an experience that will touch the heart of any reader--young and old--because it so beautifully demonstrates the magical bond that brings together those at opposite ends of life's spectrum.--Janice Card


An ancient Hebrew legend tells of two brothers who each inherit half the family farm and live out their days in extraordinary caring and love. As they were taught true friendship by their father, so they lived and taught others. Such fine examples they were it was fitting the city of Jerusalem grew up on their land, with the temple of Solomon built upon the spot where each caught the other performing a secret good deed for his brother. Their story, and the city which followed, both celebrate the proverb, "How good it is for brothers to live together in friendship."

Freedman's understated retelling of this tale is a jewel of simple yet strong prose. Stories of selfless love so easily can become preachy, self conscious, or dull. This version will have none of that, and builds with a gentle but sure power which ends with the reader longing for a world of reassurance like the one created by the brothers.
Parker's soft watercolors offer an ideal complement to the gentle text. The muted colors and lines project a peace beyond the story woven by words. The net effect: believable, comforting, and memorable.--James Jacobs


Disconnected statements about books and the operation of different types of libraries result from a too-broad scope. Card, book, and online catalogs are cited as useful tools in locating books; however, few six- to nine-year-olds have the vocabulary skills needed to effectively use a catalog. Although computers are pictured in several illustrations, only one sentence indicates that library collections include more than books. Library services for children, which could have been the spark that captured the reader, are enumerated in four lackluster sentences.

The informational content is minimal; the presentation, unorganized; and the reading level, more sophisticated than the boldly colored illustrations. Some illustrations are distorted. A jogger using an online catalog appears to have newspaper feathers in her headband, and a reference librarian in profile has his mouth located mid-cheek. On the plus side, the text and illustrations present librarians as helpful and pleasant. Although some children may page through the pictures, the book fails to create any enthusiasm for library use. An eight-year-old who read the book gave it a thumb's down.

--Marsha Broadway


Subtitled *The Complete Book of the Amazing Rubber Band*, Graham's breezy book centers upon short but interesting pieces of information about the rubber band: history (first rubber bands were made from slicing plastic bottles into threads), manufacturing (how long rubber tubes are cooked, cured, and cut into bands), specialty bands (keeping claws shut on live lobsters to prevent their injuring one another; holding flower buds together so they will not bloom in shipment). Rubber band music is included, as are experiments to prove how heat and cold affect rubber molecules and tests to check for the three qualities demanded by consumers: modulus, elongation, and break strength.

In addition are facts (75 billion manufactured each year--300 for each American; the U.S. Post Office is the biggest customer), toys to build powered by rubber bands, and even a few rubber band jokes. Highly readable and carefully
researched, this snappy volume can capture readers who didn't even know they were interested in the history and daily impact of the ever present rubber band.
--James Jacobs


Early one rainy morning Alison loads her mother's car with clothes, supplies, and her ailing grandfather and runs away. Her mother has become too pushy lately, trying to shove her into liberated womanhood while at the same time holding her back from making her own choices. Add to that the fact that Mother is planning to put Grandfather into a rest home and Alison decides to leave Minnesota and try to locate her father in Massachusetts. Though she hasn't seen her artist father since she was a baby, she feels certain he will understand her and welcome her and his father. The reader never loses sight of the destination but it is the journey that is most important in the book. As they travel, her grandfather helps her understand her father and mother and her responsibility in the family. She also has to deal with her grandfather's degenerative illness and the menacing little people he begins to imagine around him. A growing-up book of the best kind.--Lovisa Lyman


Junius misses his grandfather, his stories of the tiny Caribbean island where he was raised, his island vocabulary, his daily companionship. Grandfather Jackabo has recently left the chill of North America and returned to the home of his youth to live out his days and all Junius has of him are letters. At first reading the letters are just like a visit with Jackabo but little by little hints of danger and fear come through the tightly wedged lines. Junius and his parents wonder if Jackabo's mind is being affected by age, heat, or too much Planter's Punch. Certainly Grandfather is fading. Junius and his father fly to the island to try to convince Jackabo to come back to the States. Smugglers, it turns out, are trying to take over the island beginning with a cove close to where Jackabo lives. Unfortunately the suspense that has built up from the beginning of the book never results in any sort of confrontation. That happens offstage between the police and the smugglers and Junius reads about it in the newspaper. The confrontation that interests the author has nothing to do with the smugglers. She wants Junius and his father, Darius, to confront the island life Jackabo espoused and Darius rejected. For all three men, the book represents a coming to terms with their roots. Even when one regards this as the book's focus, however, the ending comes too quickly, is too neat.
The writing is good and to its credit, it is a boy's book.--Lovisa Lyman


Nutty Nutsell, President of the Student Council, arranged a ski vacation for a number of his fellow students during the Christmas holidays. Once in their hotel room, he and his friends discover secret plans hidden in a bathtub drain with a plea to protect them until the real owner returns. They want to do the right thing but realize they do not know who is trustworthy and who is not. Things become more serious when their lives are threatened, and they are put in a locked and guarded room.

A companion volume to *Nutty For President* and *Nutty and the Mastermind Thief,* Hughes' latest work features the five memorable friends whose skills and successes are routinely underestimated—even by the five themselves. The plot moves quickly and credibly, the boys meet and solve their problems with a fine balance of fear and confidence, the suspense and adventure hold a reader's attention, and the conclusion is satisfying.--James Jacobs


Hurd, who once played guitar in a rock band called New Tokaloma Swamp Band and should know these things, teams up Miles Possem and his sax with three other creature musicians to form a Swamp Band. When their civilized neighbors complain about their practicing, the band takes to practicing in the swamp. There the "sharp-toothed, long-tailed, yellow-eyed" alligators like their music and invite them to play at the alligator ball. When the dance is over, the band members discover that they are not only on the program but on the menu. Vibrant illustrations make the pages pulse—especially when the alligators, dressed in their fancy finery, swoop and dip to the strains of the traditional tune, "Mama Don't Allow."--Lovisa Lyman


Margaret and Lawrence Hyde outline in this book the problem of missing children—children who have run away, been kidnapped, either by a parent or a stranger, or children who are the victims of homicide and criminal assault. It appears that the biggest problem in locating missing children is in a concentrated and organized method of information exchange. It is only recently that the police have put any sort of priority on the location of missing children. Case histories are provided as well as a description of various programs and support
groups available both for the parents of missing children as well as children of teens attempting to contact their parents.

Although this is classified as an adolescent book and gives tips for teens who have run away from home and is written simply enough to be understood by young adults, its primary audience is for adults--parents of missing children. The book tends to be redundant. I picked it up because I was concerned about the problem of missing children. By the end of the book I was tired of hearing all the numerous ways a child could be exploited. The Hydes also get caught up in statistics. Some specific statistics are given but more often statistics are dramatically expressed: "Within the next hour, more than 200 boys, girls, and teenagers of all ages may be reported missing in the United States." Doubtless, this is a timely book and a growing problem, but the audience should have been better defined and it could have been more concisely written. --Karen Haroldsen


When Deedie's older brother died, she became her mother's "Two-In-One" and was required to give her mother a Geranium for Mother's Day since that was what brother Richie had always given her. This is just the beginning of Deedie's problems. Labeled an under-achiever at a young age, teachers gave her dittoed handouts and generally ignored her. But the real crises is when she unwittingly attends a make-out party and she has to make-out in the closet with Joey Falcaro, her sworn enemy--the boy who calls her "Piano Legs."

This is a seemingly typical teen book but it is told in a delightful manner. The first page begins:

A girl friend named Allie Loomis who was in my Junior High once told me, "The trouble with you, Deedie, is you don't recognize Bullshit when you see it."

If anyone reading this book happens to run across Allie, I would appreciate it very much if you tell her that I recognize it now.

After making out with Joey Falcaro, she thinks that maybe he will stop calling her "Piano Legs" but finds that it really hasn't changed anything. They are still sworn enemies but gradually learn to be friends. I really loved this book. It is humorously yet realistically told. --Karen Haroldsen


A quilt comforts two little girls, far removed in time. The first, a little pioneer, clings to the brightly colored coverlet as she follows her parents across the plains to a new home in the West. The second finds comfort from the same
quilt when her family leaves their western home and travels miles and miles over paved highways to a new home in the East. Vintage dePaola illustrations add depth to the simple story. Both story and pictures could comfort a child afraid of change.--Lovisa Lyman


A brief, amusing and accurate story of the conception of a great statue to remind the French people of their own lack of freedom, and the long, slow creation of it as a gift to the United States, shifting from its wry tone with the eventual success of the efforts of Laboulaye and Bartholdi to create the Statue of Liberty and get it into New York Harbor, and more with the addition of Emma Lazarus' beautiful poem, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to be free . . .", this little book brings to young readers what they ought to hear about--not just on the hundredth birthday of the famous statue.
--Carol Oaks


When a Vietnamese toad is desperate for water on a drought ridden earth, he does something about it--takes the long journey to the King of Heaven. Inspired by his example he is joined by bees, a rooster and a thirsty, but mighty tiger. The three companions wait respectfully outside the royal chambers as the toad hops inside to make his request. His hop is a bit long and he lands in the royal lap. The incensed King calls for help only to have his guards, his Thunder God and his monstrous beast vanquished by toad's friends--the bees, the rooster and the tiger. Wisely the King of Heaven changes his tone and begins to address the toad with the respectful term, "uncle," and listens to his plea for rain. Rain is promised with the king's admonition that from then on all the toad need do when he wants rain is to croak. That is how the croaking toad became the signal for rain in Vietnam. The reader will enjoy the dialog as well as the elegantly simple shapes and oriental blocks of color in this amusing story of a courageous toad.
--Lillian Heil


Myra Cohn Livingston has given us a new collection of Christmas verse. Included in the book are old time favorites such as "A Visit From St. Nicholas" by Clement C. Moore, St. Luke 2:8-14 from the Holy Bible, and contemporary
poets, David McCord and John Ciardi. There are serious poems concerning the 
real meaning of Christmas, funny verses and poems about Christmas trees and 
Santa Claus. The book is beautifully illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman whose 
*Little Red Riding Hood* was selected as a 1984 Caldecott Honor. The drawings 
are all framed and are colorful expressive interpretations of the verses.--Catherine 
Bowles

This book contains Longfellow's classic poem, *Paul Revere’s Ride*. The 
illustrations seem to be for children of a younger age than the poem is written 
for. There is little expression on any of the characters to indicate the tenseness 
and stress of the situation. The characters are almost cartoon-like stereotypes. 
The techniques and colors used by the artist to create dramatic affects did not 
establish the mood of the poem. On page 43 the text reads,
"A cry of defiance and not of fear
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forever-more."
There are stars in a blue sky but everything else seems to be bright daylight. 
The reader might question whether Paul Revere would select a white* horse to 
ride on a secret mission at night. Page 34 tells that it was moonlight but as you 
look at the illustration you almost have more of a feeling of sunlight. Page 33 
said, "And felt the damp of the river fog." The picture does not make you feel 
that Paul Revere is near enough to feel the fog.--Catherine Bowles

* In the Weston Woods supplement to their cassette biography series by Jean 
Fritz, the author is quoted as saying that one of the elusive facts she tried to find 
out about Paul Revere was the name of the horse that he rode on his Big Ride. 
She finally gave up and three weeks after her book on Paul Revere was in print 
she found the name of the horse--Brown Beauty.

Thumbing quickly through this 9" x 11" informational book about space did 
not make my heart beat faster. The pages appeared to have some variety in 
format, but nothing made me stand up and take notice. Settling down and 
reading the chapter on rockets, astronauts, and all the planets in the solar system, 
however, was a different matter. Maurer does not simply present facts and data 
about space and space travel, but laces the text with comparisons, relationships, 
and focused views which put information into memorable context.
In a discussion about rockets, for instance, Maurer tells that a Redstone (which took America's first astronaut in to space) used 10,000 gallons of fuel for the 120 mile flight. A compact car, by comparison, uses four gallons to cover the same distance. Rocket=60 feet per gallon; car=30 miles per gallon. In comparing relative distances, he referred to the distance from earth to moon Voyager traveled (which was discussed earlier in the book), then mentioned to get to Neptune it would have to go 20,000 times this distance. "A football field is 20,000 times the length of this line (---), which should give you an idea of how much farther Neptune is than the moon."

A variety of unique offerings in the format became apparent in closer reading, like the page of seven pictures showing how a space suit is donned (takes five minutes and can be done without help), and a 1939 cover of "Fantastic Adventures" magazine which shows a man from earth shaking hands with a martian.

The presentation of data is noteworthy, the perspective of space is broad, the supporting facts are interesting in this look at our solar system.--James Jacobs

Joe Conway has lost his best friend. Never Brought to Mind is his plan of mourning for lost happiness, lost innocence and possibly most of all, lost youth.

Joe and Hollis have been friends since fifth grade when Hollis and all the Dillinghams moved to town. When Joe learned what it meant to be friends with Hollis, he wasn't afraid to be different—to befriend an old man with honest friendship for example, his own life took on new dimension. Now in their senior year, Hollis and Joe's girl have been killed in an auto accident for which Joe feels responsible.

The book explores Joe's depression and inability to pick up the threads of his life and attempts to make a positive statement about living and learning from pain. Unfortunately, the process is lethargic and the denouement frenzatic and unreal and the admirable intent is lost in transit.--Janet Francis

If anyone could write a novel about unicorns and pull it off, it would be Meredith Ann Pierce. Pierce, known for her highly acclaimed novel The Darkangel, has begun a new trilogy with Birth of the Firebringer. Although it may sound suspicious for a reviewer to be overly enthusiastic about a book, Birth of the Firebringer must be spoken of with the greatest enthusiasm. First
of all, Meredith Pierce is one of the finest fantasy writers to come around in a long time. She published her first novel at age 23, and now continues to write spellbinding stories.

*Birth of the Firebringer* is a novel that grabs with its sure audacity, haunts with moving poetic passages, and moves the reader with its narrative. It is about Jan, prince of the Unicorns, who is a disgrace to his father, Korr. Jan likes to break rank, go off on his own, and not carry himself with the dignity expected of one in his station. Finally, Korr agrees to let Jan go along with other initiate Unicorns to a lake at the foot of the Hallow Hills, where the young unicorns will experience their rite of passage. It is a treacherous voyage, because they must pass through lands where enemies of the Unicorns threaten them. This lake was once an ancestral home to the Unicorns, but has long since been taken over by creatures known as the wyverns. Thus, the Unicorns approach the lake at night, while their enemies are asleep. Jan expects to see his destiny reflected in the lake, as do the other unicorns. What he sees, however, is much different than what he expected.

The title of the novel refers to the title of a saviour whom the unicorns are expecting to come among them, someone who will help them win back their lands. This ties together with Han's story in a rather unexpected fashion. Pierce is a writer to watch, she writes the kind of fantasy an aficionado always hopes to see.—Tim Wadham


When Walter Galt and Winston Bongo, also known as the Snarkout Boys, discover the Napoleon of Crime, Wallace Nussbaum, has escaped from Devil's Island, they know that once again the world is not safe. Fed on hot Borgelnuskies, available only at the Deadly Nightshade Diner--We Never Close, a pseudo-werewolf is loose in the city of Baconburg. Combining the talents of Osgood Sigerson, the world's greatest detective, his friend and personal biographer, Dr. Ormond Sacker, the Honorable Lama Lumpo Smythe-Finkel, Howling Frog, the Mighty Gorilla, Lydia LaZonga, and a myriad of others, the Snarkout Boys catch up with Wallace Nussbaum, in an exciting climax at the Garden of Earthly Bliss Drive-in and Pizzeria.

If you have a sick sense of humor and a taste for the bizarre (as I do), you will love this sequel to *The Snarkout Boys and the Avocado of Death*. Mr. Pinkwater brings together an incredible set of circumstances and coincidences, everything from a programmable avocado to a colony of Romanians who compulsively set fires at drive-in theaters. The story is told basically by Walter Galt but includes the thoughts of the Werewolf, selections of poetry by the
famous poet Jonathan Quicksilver, and excerpts from the *Times of Africa* and the *Baconburg Free Press*. The whole thing is unbelievable from beginning to end and I loved every minute of it.--Karen Haroldsen


*Baby-Sitting Is a Dangerous Job* has a provocative title--and one with which many junior high girls would agree. However, the commonly agreed upon dangers of baby-sitting, such as ill-mannered brats, empty fridges and broken TVs are not the dangers Darcy meets as she fills in for the ailing housekeeper in the home of Mrs./Dr. Foster and Company which includes three ill-mannered brats, a private pool and kidnappers.

When Darcy, Jeremy, Melissa and Shana are kidnapped and taken to an isolated old house by the rough father and brothers of one of Darcy's classmates (who has run away from home to escape their abuse) Darcy knows she must be responsible for the safe return of the children. Since her thirteen uneventful years haven't given her much experience in escape techniques, things look pretty black. With a fair amount of realistic detail (including bathroom arrangements, hamburgers and greasy fries for breakfast and sleeping four to a dirty mattress on the floor) the two long days are documented, and Darcy's imaginative efforts to effect an escape offer compelling reading. When the rescue finally occurs, it is believable and welcome.--Janet Francis


Peter was having to get used to a lot of changes in his life, in Brooklyn: a private school instead of the public one he's loved back in Peoria, and no friends at all so far--he missed his buddies back home. His sister DeeDee, age seven, made a host of friends while he went home and moped in his attic--or made sketches, or tried to study. Then someone gave DeeDee a big grey cat named Grissi; by sheer force of loving and happy personality that cat won a home and place in the hearts of all the family, even their father. Life takes on a brighter look--until suddenly Grissi, escaping attack from a neighbor's dog, disappears, and apparently cannot be found. Everyone they know helps look for Grissi, and in the course of a few days events come that change the lives of a lot of people. A good story.--Carol Oaks

A little boy compares his lot as an only child to that of his friends who have "brothers and sisters filling up their houses." At first he sees only advantages to brothers and sisters: someone to whisper with in bed at night, someone to share the work. Then he begins to remember the times when being an only child is wonderful: Christmas when all the gifts are for him, never having to wait his turn to do things with his parents. He decides that being an only child is best. Classical Carrick illustrations cheer the soliloquy along.
--Lovisa Lyman


When Rudolph, a young vampire, is banned from his family's cemetery vault for befriending Tony, a human, he moves into Tony's basement. This creates massive problems for Tony who has to temporarily, on purpose, lose the key to the basement storage shed to keep his parents from finding Rudolph's coffin. The best part of the book is when Rudolph disguises Tony as a vampire and takes him to the Vampire Ball in the Valley of Doom.

Tony and Rudolph both appear in Ms. Sommer-Bodenburg's book *My Friend the Vampire.* The character I liked best is Anna, Rudolph's young sister who has not yet gotten her teeth and still drinks milk. She is sweet on Tony and dances with him at the Vampire Ball. The illustrations by Amelie Glienke are one of the highlights of the book. The front cover shows Rudolph sitting in his coffin, reading a book by candle light. The only thing that caused me any concern was the flagrant lying that takes place in the book. In order to visit and protect Rudolph's location, Tony makes up elaborate lies. A plus to that, though, is that Tony does not enjoy lying and is relieved when Rudolph goes back to the family tomb so that he can tell the truth for a change. This book is sort of kind of good, but not that good.--Karen Haroldsen


Black and white photographs and a matter-of-fact text chronicle the progress of a Vietnamese refugee family in Chicago against a backdrop of their past life in Vietnam. Briefly Stanek sketches the Communist takeover of Vietnamese, the journey of the boat people, the Nguyen family's long wait in Thailand and finally their arrival in Chicago. The bulk of the book deals with their lives in Chicago. There they live humbly, doing their best to blend their customs and
traditions with American ones. They eat Vietnamese food, dance Vietnamese dances, and hold centuries-old celebrations while they drink Coke and Fanta and dress up for Halloween. A fair treatment. A fine book for children.--Lovisa Lyman


Michael Foreman is a winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal, an English award comparable to the American Caldecott Award. The Kate Greenaway Medal is awarded each year for the most distinguished illustrations in a children's book first published in the United Kingdom the preceding year. Mr. Foreman has given us a new illustrated version of Robert Louis Stevenson's well-known *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Although this collection of poetry is a hundred years old many of the verses such as "The Swing" and "My Shadow" are still favorites of children today.

This edition was produced to celebrate the centenary of the first publication. In this edition Michael Foreman has given us a fresh interpretation of the poems. There is an indication of a "wistful enchantment" at the same time an exquisite childlike look at these old favorites.

The book includes an informative introduction telling of the history of the book, a table of contents, an index of first lines for easy location of needed poems.--Catherine Bowles


A "truly" attractive book for young and old alike. With bold primary print and real colored photos, this small informational book is packed with concept upon concept. It is written in a logical sequence for the understanding and curiosity of the novice and expert. In its 43 pages of text, one reads with interest and a tenacity to put the book down only when the last word is finished. Too bad it came when I was over age fifty rather than age seven.--Gus Clark


This is the fifth and, says the author, final book about the Robinson family of Greene County, Indiana. It is the first I've read and I liked it well enough to read another. This installment finds heroine Seely and her mother and brother moving from the hill country into a town to continue their valiant struggle against the Depression. Seely's father died in the last book and her mother must support ten-year-old Robert and high-school-age Seely. Mother decides she can
do it better in town where she has already been selling homemade pies to the hotel. Baking pies stretches into long hours of cooking and cleaning in the hotel kitchen. The children also have to work. Seely cleans houses for aging neighbors and Robert traps and cures skins. Still there is barely enough to pay the rent and keep a supply of coal. When the electricity is turned off, they light up the lamps they used in the hills. The Salvation Army becomes their sole source of clothes. It is a tale about family survival and individual maturing that stands by itself but leaves the reader attached enough to the characters to want to read more about them.--Lovisa Lyman


Peggy Donovan's name belies her ill-acquainted fit as a foreigner in an industrial English village when her father's work takes them there. Even when she finds the brick ruin in Adam's Common (a small city park grown wild), she cannot puzzle through the feelings she senses there. No more can William who watches her from an earlier century, inside the ruin when it was alive.

The two protagonists each live out their separate storylines; William to successful but lonely world, bequeathing his estate to the memory of his only friend, Adam, the child whose love for William had cost him his life, Peggy to a place on the heroic side of a city battle to keep Adam's Common pristine. Not new, but an interesting idea...the two ages each affecting a piece of earth which knew them both. The writing is occasionally awkward and self-conscious, the characters uneven and only occasionally believable, but a thread of maintained interest keeps the reader at it until the end.--Janet Francis