Book Reviews

Authors
James Jacobs, Elizabeth Wahlquist, Kathy Harwood, Janet Francis, Katie Blake, Lovisa Lyman, Lillian Heil, Celia Tomlin, and Carol V. Oaks

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol6/iss5/3
Book Reviews

Brisk. Smooth. Tantalizing. In 1872, Vesper Holly became an orphan at age 16. At her father's death she inherited his estate but earlier had inherited his love of adventure, faith in past heroes, and passion for solving mysteries. Intrigued by her father's historical research into the tiny kingdom of Illyria, she visits the country accompanied by her guardian Brinnie, a colleague of her father's, and immediately someone tries to kill her. She and Brinnie find themselves in the middle of a brewing revolution, and also at the center of an historical discovery which can alter the future of the entire country.

Although not fantasy, *The Illyrian Adventure* feels like one with its fast pace and high adventure. It offers a reader a variety of treats: Alexander's polished prose, a compelling plot, and memorable characters--particularly the charming and headstrong Vesper. But one of its greatest strengths is the genuine and warm relationship of a wise, aging man and an impetuous teenage girl who are complete opposites and yet understand each other perfectly.

*The Illyrian Adventure* is written in a lighter vein than Alexander's recent *Westmark* trilogy, but is to be taken no less seriously as a fine example of careful and satisfying craftsmanship.—James Jacobs


Artist-naturalist Arnosky takes his details seriously. Consequently, the reader gets more from each lovely illustration in this quiet look at deer who come to the brook. The buck who comes first is shown alone because male deer generally are solitary. A doe and two fawns come next. While they leisurely drink, walk about, and finally nap, wildlife goes about its daily business. A brook trout jumps. A sparrow builds a nest. A white admiral butterfly flutters overhead.

Arnosky takes the viewer into the scene by recreating the discoveries which could be made if the brook were actually visited, by extending the art to the edge of each page to create the impression the scene goes on much further than the focus of this scene, and by capturing the graceful anatomy of the deer so accurately and with such feeling. The size of the text has been reduced and does not intrude into the mood of the book as it did in his *Watching Foxes*. A stunning book.—James Jacobs

Bryn Kinney's only relative, as far as she knows, is dead. Her Gram has always been so secretive about her past, and Bryn's, that Bryn knows of no one living whom she can call family. She finds a newspaper clipping that might indicate something about her "grandmother's" background, and as soon as she has finished her high school spring term, she starts her search for her roots. The story of her search is interesting, and logical; it makes a good story for quick and amusing reading, and makes almost no demands on the reader.--Carol V. Oaks


What is an eleven year old to do when he sees a case of wife abuse and the wife doesn't seem to know what to do? Cracker Jackson becomes involved with Alma and her daughter Nicole who are abused by Billy Ray. Byars has dealt with a very sensitive subject, that is also very difficult for young children to understand. The characters were plausible and the situations typical of what we usually see of wife abuse. A child from a broken home is often more sensitive to problems of others when they are not too upset by their own problems.--Celia Tomlin


My initial reaction to *Twilight Realm* by Christopher Carpenter was "What a creative way to build the problem for a fantasy!" Carpenter lets each of his 5 teenage protagonists--3 boys and 2 girls, become what they secretly desire to be. Justin, small but verbal, becomes a warrior with the muscle power of three men. Kate, always insecure, apologetic and acutely aware of her dependence on others becomes an ice maiden, remote and impervious to the feelings of others. Willie, tall, inarticulate and clumsy, becomes limber, swift moving and lethal with his black whip. Teresa, plump, cheerful and short, becomes slim and graceful, capable of flying and of creating visions that frighten attackers. Finally Paul, apologetic about his interest in knowledge, becomes the owner of a talisman that enables him to conjure up mental shields, move inanimate objects and be confident of his own wisdom and power.

But the story does not live up to the dramatic struggle one might predict. Somehow the story is too predictable even though Christopher creates a companion world to earth with vividness and intensity. The young people all receive ample evidence that their realized dreams are destroying their humanity, but their insights are almost nil except for Paul. Right from the beginning he maintains more detachment from his new powers and after the needless
destruction of the forest people he realizes their destructive quality. Teresa begins to question the value of her dream self when she finds she can't tolerate ugliness and is constantly deserting her companions when they need her. Finally when Paul has supposedly been killed, the four are imprisoned without their weapons, and they return to their normal selves and realize how different the secret desires have made them. Only Teresa and Kate hesitate to return to the ethereal beauty and icy remoteness of their secret desires. Willie and Justin can hardly wait to feel the agility and strength which they gloried in. They are controlled by their wishes for power and glory.

As the story progresses, it is Kate and Paul who continue to have doubts about their own humanity as they feel the force of their new powers. At the end of the story only Kate and Paul have learned from the experience—they both realize that those secret desires were not wise ones and that their best selves are composed of their ability to meet problems and most of all to be concerned about others.

The weak aspect of the story seems to stem from a matter of philosophy. Willie, Justin and Teresa have been given family backgrounds from which they see no way to free themselves. Justin, frustrated by the new independent Kate, rushes out desperately to find another female to control. Teresa is too crushed by her physical plainness to think of others; Willie is in despair over his behavior towards Teresa and the possessiveness of his invalid mother. After declaring her independence of Justin, Kate weakly tells Paul not to expect great changes in her. No one but Paul seems to feel any strength, optimism or hope about the future. That, in effect, has been the case all the way through and it makes the outcome too predictable. Most of the characters are a good example of a sort of hopeless "I'm trapped by my past and my own inadequacies" sort of feeling and that makes neither good philosophy nor a good story. Justin, Teresa, and Willie could have made different choices (and if anything could have made the error of their secret dreams apparent, having them come true should have done it). The most exciting stories let the reader in on these individual struggles and Christopher made it too apparent right from the start that only Paul would discover his own humanity and possibly help Kate find hers. That's not a very high percentage—even in the heavenly battle for free agency only one third of the host chose to give that precious right up, and were cast out of heaven.—Lillian Heil


Gom is the tenth child of Stig and his Wife, who disappears on the day of Gom's birth. The other children are taken to live with townsfolk, but Stig keeps
Gom with him. Gom does not grow very big, but he helps his father with woodcutting chores and trading the wood in town. Gom is very wise, but does not understand when his father lets the town folk cheat him. Gom and his father sing songs going to and from town and while in the woods. Some of the tunes are included in the book. Gom discovers some of the mystery about his mother and clues to his future from a stranger in town, from gold, and from forest friends.

This is a very peaceful and calming story with a touch of magic and suspense.--Celia Tomlin


Latest in the series about how an animal's body fits its lifestyle (earlier titles include *A Frog's Body*, *A Horse's Body*, *A Snake's Body*, *A Cat's Body*, and *A Bird's Body*), this black-and-white photographed book depends upon the same solid logic, clear writing, and sense of detail as the others to present how a dog is served by his particular construction and accessories. With a doberman's lips pulled back, Cole tells how the front teeth are just right for nibbling meat off bones and biting fleas; how the four canine teeth hold prey; how the front molars move across each other like scissors to shear flesh; and the back molars are for crushing bones. A clear line drawing illustrates the process of how dogs cool themselves in the absence of sweat glands by panting. And the facts and information about pooches in general continues in brief but complete prose.--James Jacobs


A fun and fast paced story that fulfills the wish of every girl who has dreamed of becoming a princess overnight. The humor is not as uproarious and bright as some of Conford's books, but plausible. The predictable solution is carried out a little awkwardly. Not a great book, but it is fun.--Celia Tomlin


Life in the early years on the open Nebraska prairie was extremely harsh on both the land and the people. Only a few could survive the hard elements that affected both the physical and emotional parts of people. Louisa had always lived on the prairie with her parents and brother. She was able to see the beauty of the land and find compensations in the life it provided. When the new doctor brings his city bred wife to live on the prairie, Louisa sees a new side of life. A life of beautiful clothes, and books, and fragile womanhood. Emmeline is beautiful and charming and strange and has lots of books. Emmeline is not able
to deal with the great distances between families, or the Indians, or the long periods of being left alone. As often as possible, Louisa and her mother try to help, especially when they know the baby is due, but Emmeline does not have the strength to deal with her problems.

This is a very powerful and moving story of pioneer life as it really happened to those who tried to live on the prairie. For many, this was a very depressing and discouraging life. Some of them moved away after a short experience, others committed suicide either physically or mentally or, as in this story, both ways. The young girl, who has always found life appealing on the prairie, is surprised to see the problems of this new woman. She also experiences a new realization that life has not always been easy for her mother, but her mother has been able to find a more positive way to get past the disappointments. This is not a happy story to read, but does have a lot to say about the way we look at our lives. The characters are well drawn and complete people. The setting is described to add to the background of the disillusionment of Emmeline and vision of beauty seen by the girl.--Celia Tomlin


Unpaginated.

No newcomer to concept books for young children, Crews creates scenes which appeal to toddler and adult alike. His counting book *Ten Black Dots* (originally published in 1968 and now redesigned and revised) is no exception. The ten black dots are introduced one at a time and accompanied by satisfying rhyme. "One dot can make a sun/or a moon when day is done. Two dots can make the eyes of a fox/or the eyes of keys that open locks." The bold, clean art draws the eye while the ear is busy with rhythmic, engaging verse.

After all ten dots appear in the last scene, Crews lines them up in ten rows for a final and straightforward counting exercise. A fitting and balanced ending to an inviting and imaginative book.--James Jacobs


$10.90. 156p.

*The Absolute Ultimate End* is a junior high school girl's romance with a couple of pluses. Heroine Maggie decides to pursue whichever extracurricular activity hearthrob Stevie Garber does. But instead of ending up opposite him in the school play, she finds herself tutoring blind Doreen. Just when she finds that she doesn't mind tutoring so much and really likes Doreen, she discovers that changes being proposed by local politicians may eliminate all extracurricular programs including programs for the handicapped. Add to that blow the fact that Maggie's own father is one of the candidates for the school board who is
advocating the cuts and we have enough reason for Maggie to mobilize her friends for a march on city hall. The writing is clever, the vocabulary believable and the message worthwhile.--Lovisa Lyman


Almost every elementary teacher has a science unit on insects somewhere in the curriculum. Aileen Fisher's sixteen bug poems are here to help. Something whimsical with funny little details on every page to lighten up the classroom drearies. For instance:

When Mowers Pass
Beetle-folk beneath the grass
Must get scared when mowers pass,
And go darting helter-skelter
Looking for an air-raid shelter. --Katie Blake


Reminiscent of Cormier's *I am the Cheese, Call Back Yesterday* explores the memory of a young woman who has experienced some catastrophic experience in sessions with a questioning doctor, confined in some sort of enclosed military establishment. The girl, Cindy Cooper, has suffered serious injuries from which she is still recovering, but the shattering memories of her immediate past soon obscure them.

As Cindy slips in and out of her painful recollections, she becomes more and more anxious about the information she is revealing to the doctor ... sure that she is betraying her father's allegiance to the U.S. and the diplomatic service. The picture that she paints, in memory, of a political uprising in Saudi Arabia, and the embassy personnel held hostage for weeks, is detailed, grim and believable. Cindy's own reaching for experience beyond the privileged adolescence she has known and her sensitivity, blunted by those privileges, comes through the narrative clearly, though at times she seems more described than living.

When Cindy's shock amnesia finally dissolves and the bitter memories of a celebration catapulted into that last world war by a juvenile love triangle and surfacing madness, she grasps the meaning of nihilation, and Dr. Harper, U.S. Navy, watches the world careen toward self-destruction on the radar screen of the submarine where they are quartered.
Forman is an accomplished writer and while I may not think of Cindy again, the possibilities presented by her story have the quality of eternal nightmare.--Janet Francis


Life for Rachel has taken on a sobering hue. Her friend Jim, who has shared many happy times with Rachel and her Grandma, has found other interests. But that is not all--her Grandma is becoming very ill, and as a very little time passes it becomes more evident that she will not live long. She comes to live during her last months with Rachel and her family. Rachel does not know, in her pain, what to think or how to act. Marcia Carlson, who is a hospice nurse, comes once a week to help with understandings and comfort, strengthening her family. And Grandma herself, through her courage and her faith, can help them all to feel that "good-by" is not "good-by forever." A straight-forward and honest story, not devoid of hope.--Carol V. Oaks


*The Everlasting Hills* is about things that are everlasting--the consequences of wounding a human spirit and the healing power of forgiveness. Jeremy Tydings is the boy whose learning difficulties make him the butt of his father's scorn. Dan is an older brother whose death has deprived the father of the robust, masculine son he loved. Bethany is the sister who loves both Jeremy and her father, Breck Tydings, but cannot bridge the gap between them. Ishmael is the gentle mysterious man who has pulled away from human society and is living out his last years in the everlasting hills. When Jeremy's sister becomes interested in a young writer, Jeremy runs from the prospect of being left with a hateful father and finds refuge with Ishmael, whose gentle confidence helps him overcome his learning problems (evidently emotionally caused) and whose ill health gives Jeremy a reason to live. Ishmael never explains who he is, or why he has virtually withdrawn from humanity. Seconds before he dies, the ailing man realizes his connection to the people buried in the old village on the hill, even though Jeremy does not. Later Bethany finds that Ishmael's wife and son (who resembled Jeremy) died in a fire and that Ishmael was a son of one of the families in the old hill cemetery.

As Jeremy's father has seen his son mature, he realizes he has misjudged him, but his attempts to reach out to his son are rebuffed. Finally the two find a common cause in restoring the old hill village, but Jeremy cannot forgive his father until he realizes that his father needs his help.
Hunt writes powerfully of hatred, scorn, and the withering effect it can have on the human spirit, but the reasons behind the actions of Ishmael get in the reader's way. Why was he so mysterious to Jeremy about his last name, where he had come from and what he was looking for? If he had been coming to the mountain for ten years trying to find a connection to it, why had he never found out about the old village that everyone in town knew about? The mystery pushes the reader to expect more connections to the other characters than there are when Ishmael's past is revealed, and makes the story a little less powerful than it might be.--Lillian Heil


Mollie Hunter has again created a novel that involves the reader in a new life and makes that life not only understandable but desirable. With her tinker family, Cat roams the Scottish countryside. As the land is changed by a modern world, the family still tries to survive by the traveller code. Catriona McPhie is a strong-willed free-spirit who defies even that code as she learns the skills of traveller men and becomes a "split mechanic." Over the years, however, the world touches Cat's care-free existence. In this story of growing up, of Cat's developing love for her childhood friend, Charlie, and of the traveller ways, Cat learns to understand herself. The book is both the story of a girl becoming a woman and of a people holding onto a tradition outside of the existing world. How Cat and the travellers learn to be "themselves" speaks to that part of all of us which has the same desire.--Kathy Harwood

Editors Note: Adults who are selecting books for purchase for schools or homes need to be aware that important parts of Cat's story include a detailed description of Cat helping her mother in the birth of Cat's baby brother, a dramatic scene when she is rescued from being raped and a brief description of the physical consummation of her marriage to Charles. Adults may want to read these before purchase to make sure they feel good about ordering the book.


If you like fantasy, if you like to laugh, and if you like outrageous tales, you'll love *Howl's Moving Castle*. All in the course of a single morning, Sophie, the eldest of the three Hatter sisters, meets Wizard Howl, his moving black castle and a talking fire, and is turned into a hog by the Witch of the Waste. As it begins, the story surprises at every turn and leaves the reader puzzling to the very end. Jones creates a fast-paced story, turning a totally
incongruous world into a believable one. Packed full of humor, suspense and even romance, *Howl's Moving Castle* is a story not to miss.--Kathy Harwood


Kathy and Louise are next-door neighbors and best friends. When Louise's aunt and uncle take her on an extended summer vacation to the mountains, both girls dread the separation. Left-behind Kathy imagines rescuing her--and then is destroyed by a postcard describing the wonderful time Louise is having. Best friend becomes worst friend. Kathy is occupied and comforted by a new grandpa-type neighbor who promises her a puppy as soon as the litter is born. Louise returns to Kathy's cold shoulder. But soon all is right with the former--and current--best friends.

Kellogg's strength is his wonderful whimsy and exaggeration, particularly in the art. When the neighborhood turns into a desert with Louise's departure, he shows a desert with tire tracks leading into the empty horizon. When Kathy imagines taking home a whole litter of pups, Kellogg presents a distraught mother in the living room awash with canines, futilely trying to clean up a sea spilled dogfood. (Behind her in two neat rows on the wall are photos of each dog, each name beginning with "E"). The story itself is satisfying. The art brings an additional treat.--James Jacobs


Bewick's swan is the smallest and rarest swan in the northern hemisphere. Deborah King illustrates and Naomi Lewis writes about the life cycle of this graceful bird by tracing a complete season from meeting and mating of two swans in the arctic through the birth of their brood, trip south, and return to the northern regions.

The appeal of the book lies in its facts (the swans can fly 300 miles without stopping; parents dislodge plants from the bottom of ponds for their young), natural and readable style, and appealing art. King and Lewis are responsible for *Puffin*. And, one hopes, for many more on other wildlife.--James Jacobs


Jamie Osborn is eight years old and a dwarf. This photographic essay shows what life is like for her and her family. Different from a midget who is short all over, Jamie has short arms and legs on a body of average size. She has trouble climbing stairs, has a stool at school so her feet don't swing free and go to sleep while she sits at her desk, and takes her five-year-old brother along to reach the doorbells when she sells Girl Scout cookies. She is likely to have
some physical problems later on and visits a doctor regularly who can help her minimize those possible difficulties.

_Thinking Big_ offers a surprisingly thorough look at the many areas of Jamie's life, presenting the problems as well as the capabilities of a little person in an honest and upbeat way. The result is an informative and personal look at a girl who in one way is different from other eight-year-old girls but mostly is just like them. Kuklin's black and white photos are accompanied by smooth and readable text.--James Jacobs


C.S. Lewis received many letters from the children who read and loved _The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe_ and the other books in the _Chronicles of Narnia_. This book is a carefully edited (by Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead) collection of his answers to a number of their letters. His stepson, Douglas Gresham, in his Foreword for the book, describes "Jack" as "Kind, jolly, and generous" which is applicable also to his letters to other children. They are filled with respect, a playful humor, and a kind honesty toward his young correspondents; and only a few indirect words reveal that Lewis himself was, during parts of the time, suffering intensely the pain and grief they were part of his portion in life. _Letters to Children_ will be eagerly read by all lovers of the Narnia books.--Carol V. Oaks


The rebus has a certain appeal. Replacing some words in a text with small pictures (a picture of an eye is read "I"; a pictured heart can be read either "heart" or "love") offers variety and a challenge. Marzollo's collection of 19 rhymes (mostly Mother Goose) and 22 songs (largely old favorites suitable for middle grades in elementary school) should crank up curiosity among the young.

Rubber stamp pictures and some original drawings extend the traditional feeling of the rhymes and songs by using a dated, almost antique style for both the stamps and art. A good way to introduce the contemporary child to songs and verse of yore, but for one who already knows the words, the rebus effect is lessened because there is not much figuring out necessary. No music is included. Those who may not be familiar with the songs will need to find the tunes on their own.--James Jacobs

*The Stolen Law* by Anne Mason is the second in a series. I now want to read the first, *The Dancing Meteorite*.

It's an interplanetary world which recognizes the need for different kinds of laws. Kira is a communications cadet, very adept at languages, who is assigned to different planets. There are laws particularly for people like Kira to protect the developing planets she might go to. They must not divulge what they learn. Kira's excellent qualifications put her with many men from a planet where women are so fragile they have to be very protected to guarantee the race continuing. She proves valuable to those of no integrity as well as to excellent leaders and beings.

She finds out laws are being tampered with and the moral choices she has to make are filled with intrigue and genuine concern.

I found it a compelling story of the position of law and its relation to the responsibility of individual choice. I give it a high recommendation.--Elizabeth Wahlquist


Fourteen-year old Russel Susskit was an Eskimo in a modern world. He listened and loved old Oogruck's stories about what it was like when the world was just a man and his sled. Oogruck told stories of times when dogs, men, whales, and the whole world made a song together and heard each other singing. Russel wanted more than anything else to hear that song and to make a song of his own. *Dogsong* is the tale of how he finally has a team of his own, and how together they work out their own song, which reaches out to include a woman-girl as well. Gary Paulsen's story is a boy's search for identity in the roots of his ancestors. It is a lyrical, poetic tale, which leaves its readers entranced and searching for a dream song of their own.--Kathy Harwood


Once again Rob and Soup are out innocently following a course of misadventure much to the amusement of the reader. With Christmas nearly upon them, there is more than the usual touch of sentiment. Rob experiences finding the good in people whether they are the poorest family in town or the manager of the saloon. Actually the Christmas pageant helps the whole town find a new spirit of Christmas, when the least likely man in town becomes Santa and Soup invents a novel entrance for Santa and his sled.
All the Soup books have provided many long laugh periods. This story does that and more with a warm Christmas spirit added.--Celia Tomlin


In the summer of her twelfth year Harry Beecher (not ready to be called Harriet) gets a pony of her own. That is the icing on the cake. There is nothing more she wants in the world. Along with her widowed mother, older brother and hired hands Poke and Lightning, who are as close as family, she lives on what she considers to be the best cattle ranch in Florida. If all goes well the bank will soon be paid off and the ranch will be free and clear. The future looks good. Then a whole year's crop of calves becomes diseased and must be slaughtered. Harry has to give up her pony to help save the ranch. It is the hardest thing she has ever done but in the end, her sacrifice helps hold the family together. The book has some very touching moments despite a formulaic denouement.

--Lovisa Lyman


One reviewer's comment on the book jacket says Pierce's book "stands beside *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. He is right. Not only are there plot similarities--young girl survives in the cold north countries--but the feeling is the same. The same eerie quality of fact-based fantasy. Admittedly there is less of an attempt to make the fantasy plausible in *Woman* than in *Clan* but the sons and daughters of *Clan* -lovers will love *Woman*. For those of us who didn't particularly like *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, there is the joy of reading good writing. In fact the *Woman* is better written than *Clan*. The plot hangs together better with less unnecessary verbiage and more believable characterization. It is the sort of tale that ancient Laplanders might have told around their fires.--Lovisa Lyman


Powzyk spent several weeks in the spring of 1983 living in a ranger's hut in the Australian bush. *Wallaby Creek* is a prose and visual chronicle of her time there. Extraordinary watercolor paintings show uniquely Australian animals in their natural habitat. Though the book may appeal to young children, it can also inform adults.--Lovisa Lyman

Rockwell has a knack for organizing and presenting slices of the world to young children in an accurate and appealing way. *Big Wheels* identifies the large vehicles, those with big wheels, we sometimes see and shows how they help shape the landscape and smooth out our lives. Rockwell includes a backhoe, a front loader, a dumptruck, a combine, and a tractor scraper, among others. The art is uncluttered (except for the view of the compactor at the city dump, naturally) and anatomically correct for each of the machines. An appealing guide to mechanical monsters for the very young.--James Jacobs


Cary Carmichael is an unusual student at Winslow School. He does not come from an upper class family nor is he on a scholarship, but he has a lot to learn as do his roommates. Cary feels important when an upper classman, Billings, finds his French background useful.

The characters well represent those that might be at a private school, but the humor of the main problem, cheating, is not very amusing. Related situations do present some humorous situations, but the whole picture is not as funny as some of Roos early books set in elementary school. The morals brought out at the end are expressed by the right people, but not everyone learned their lesson which seems real.--Celia Tomlin


Jason is having problems with where his mind wants to take him. He believes his new step-mother is a witch with a bear as a familiar. His poetry becomes wild and uncontrolled and he is not sure he can continue to live this way.

Dealing with suicide wishes is a very difficult project. Senn does a good job, but some children may have a hard time understanding where the character really is in his emotional state. This book might help someone heading in this direction or who thinks he is going nuts or has problems adjusting to a new family member because the problems are resolved positively.

The step-mother finally breaks through and she and Jason come to terms with her position in the family and both of their talents as artists in their own fields.--Celia Tomlin

Fourteen short story puzzles will intrigue both the reader and the listener in this delightful book. Besides the fun of solving a mystery, anyone would enjoy the tiny glimpse into the culture which originated the folktale.

One sample:

One fine summer day two fathers and two sons went fishing at their favorite lake. They fished and talked all morning long and by noon everyone had caught one fish. As the two fathers and two sons walked back home, everyone was happy because each had a fish even though only three fish had been caught.

Two fathers and two sons. Only three fish and no fish were lost. How can this have happened?

The answer on the next page is revealed by the picture and the following:

Only three people went fishing.
A boy, his father, and his grandfather:
Two sons and two fathers.

These puzzles should sharpen reading and listening skills. Children would have practice in visualizing events and images, which would help comprehension and conceptual thinking skills.

Besides all that--everyone loves a mystery!--Katie Blake


A very readable general book on dogs. Information on general types of dogs rather than specific breeds although breeds are mentioned and compared. The history and development of the general types of dogs was well presented. Includes general feelings about the types that would make good pets for an individual, but does not include much pet care. Social and psychological descriptions are helpful and informative. Unusual approach for an animal book for young people, but the information will probably answer questions not openly asked.--Celia Tomlin


Laura discovers that her dearest friends don't see everything the way she does. She had never considered the differences before, but she begins to wonder why the differences are there. Then Daurice moves into the neighborhood. She is very strange and Laura is sure she is a witch. Laura and her friends discover new ideas about each other and their religions as they host holiday parties.
Doris Buchanan Smith has had a unique ability to write about very sensitive subjects for children in a way they can understand the problem and grow from the experience of the story. Religion can be a very confusing question for children, especially if they are surrounded by a wide variety of choices. It was nice to read a story that wove characters with such different beliefs into real situations while explaining some of those differences and maintaining the characters friendship.--Celia Tomlin


Martin Hastings is growing up and is no longer the "Bully of Barkham Street". Now his imagination carries him far away in new and different worlds. His dreams include getting his dog back. In the process of trying to find his way, he makes a new friend, finds success in a baby-sitting job, and learns to accept changes and disappointments.

Mary Stolz continues to make the characters strong, interesting, and amusing. The situations feel genuine for a thirteen year old boy. Young readers will enjoy this stage of Martin’s life.--Celia Tomlin


Gabby Finklestein tells the reader of her battle with being enough overweight that her schoolmates feel free to comment rudely. Trying to take hold of her limp social life in a direct way, she starts with a diet of grapefruit and eggs; later she becomes obsessed with the idea of "being in control of her life" and begins a pattern of eating and immediately regurgitating. Her parents, becoming more aware of the depth of her problem, send her to summer fat camp. There she begins to slim down in a more healthful way--and think seriously about what her other problems are doing to her. Svelte and smarter about accepting herself and others, she returns home.

This treatment of bulimia is superficial, but it might attract some readers who need to hear about it and be guided. As fiction, the story lacks something.--C. V. Oaks


*Jackaroo*--half romance, half rueful comic--imaginary shadow in a lean land or hard-riding cavalier with justice on his mind? Gwyn thought the former when she thought of him at all in her hassled existence as the practical one of the Innkeeper's children. The in-between daughter, she was too headstrong to marry and caught in a society which allowed no other acceptable status.
Like most of Voight's heroines, Gwyn is independent, courageous and stubborn; she also is, apparently, an anachronism—a romantic in a time of hard-headed practicality and desperate living. Strangely enough, after Gwyn finds the Jackaroo costume hidden in an abandoned hut and begins to right small wrongs (which somehow never come quite right to her ministerings) she discovers other romantics who also don Jackaroo's mask to preserve hope and life.

Because Voight writes with serious craftsmanship, it is difficult to be sure whether Jackaroo is what it sometimes means—a solid romance, exciting and satisfying, or what it appears at others—offering a symbolic message dealing with honesty, love and law. Either way it is enticing reading and one more direction in the seemingly endless inventiveness of Voight's imagination.—Janet Francis


Yoko Kawashima was eleven, Japanese, and living with her family in northern Korea when the communist uprising began at the end of World War II. Since Japanese in Korea were prime targets for elimination by communist troops, the three women—Yoko, her older sister and her mother—fled their village in the middle of the night without getting word to a brother and the father. The flight to safety in Japan was a months-long ordeal of hardship, terror, and starvation. Once in Japan, the hardship continued. No word arrived from the men of the family and the women could find a home only on a bench in the railway station, where the mother soon died.

This biographical tale of Watkin's childhood would be a powerful story even if told badly. But the clean and restrained descriptions of the nightmare of war, and the devastation of family separation lived by a child, make the experience even stronger. The misery is balanced by a victorious picture of human endurance and the joy of an occasional piece of luck in a time and place seemingly overlooked by anything benevolent. The result is an unforgettable story well told.—James Jacobs


Certainly this series is one of the most interesting ever published by Franklin Watts, a publisher known for its reliable but sometimes boring non-fiction.

There are eight beautifully illustrated books with the layout a little in the manner of Brittain's Usborne best sellers. Each book examines the life and experience of a typical soldier in a number of important periods in history.
Detailed information on the soldier's training and duties, his weapons, armor, and equipment, his rations and daily life, battle tactics and military discipline are provided in both text and pictures. There are also lots of revealing sidelights interspersed about the pictures.

The titles available now are: *The Greek Hoplite*, *The Medieval Knight*, *The Roman Legionary*, *The Viking Warrior*, *The British Redcoat of the Napoleonic Wars*, and *The Civil War Rifleman*.

1985:

- *The Greek Hoplite*  
- *The Medieval Knight*  
- *The Roman Legionary*  
- *The Viking Warrior*  

1986:

- *The British Redcoat of Napoleon's Wars*  
- *The Civil War Rifleman*  

Terrific.--Katie Blake