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Book Reviews

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**Book Reviews**


Mortimer, the large black crow from other Aiken books, eats anything and everything — from the toaster to the garden tools to gold bricks. His appetite gets him and the human family he controls into continual problems, but never seems to affect his health.

Each chapter of the book is a separate short story about the family and Mortimer. The title story is about a scientist who wants to document Mortimer's vocabulary ("Nevermore"). Naturally, Mortimer refuses to speak into the microphone. In fact, when the scientist isn't looking, Mortimer eats the microphone and the tape recorder.

From the invasion of the city mice to the invasion of the gold robbers, Mortimer is equal to the situation. The humor will appeal both to children and to their parents. —Lovisa Lyman


Egyptitis is one of the most fascinating infections one can catch in public school. Unfortunately, my primary school library did not have many books on Egypt and so I was ill-informed for a long time. In the middle of an eleventh-grade report on Egyptian embalming, I blurted out: "Where did you get the lovely information?"

Such "lovely information" is here: the finding and translation of the Rosetta Stone. This book is not just one line of faint praise for Champollion; it contains more than I ever got in university. Here are the contributions of Sacy, Åkerblad and Thomas Young, and how they influenced Jean François Champollion.

Then we get down to serious translation. The Rosetta Stone contained only one royal name: that of Ptolemy. The Bankes obelisk (brought to England about the same time as the Rosetta Stone and also bilingual) contained two royal names: Ptolemy and Cleopatra. The first hieroglyph in Ptolemy and the fifth in Cleopatra were the same — and thus Egyptologists began to break the code.

We are even given a complete translation of the stone. (Wish it were interlinear.) The book comes to a smashing conclusion with an "alphabet" of uniliteral hieroglyphs. If we had had *that* in grade four, what stunning notes we could have passed.

Too bad about the typographical errors in the book (literals to our friends at the British Museum). Fortunately the Egyptian scribes did not have computers. —Thom Hinckley


An imaginary girl comes to a real little girl's house to play — arriving from the rising sun in a carriage drawn by a sun-colored lion. The two friends spend the day together, reading, dressing dolls and coloring rainbows, and at the end of the day, the friend goes home toward the setting sun.

As in *Grandfather Twilight*, Berger's unique use of colors extends beyond the story and invites the reader into her world. *When the Sun Rose* begins with a visual play on the title, as the sun gives it the guise of a bright yellow rose. The glowing acrylic illustrations, which
carry on this theme of sunlight, more than add to the poetic text and spark imagination for the creation of other stories.

Four- or five-year-olds with their own imaginary friends will especially relate to the little girl of this narrative, though other children will enjoy reading and listening to the story.

—Cathy Erickson


Through photographs Linda Bove animatedly provides clear, precise examples of each letter of the alphabet and familiar words in sign language. The photographic background provides a good contrast so the placement of fingers can be easily perceived. Jim Henson's *Sesame Street* Muppets colorfully depict scenes in which the letters of the alphabet and words beginning with each letter are introduced and reinforce the photographs.

This book is similar to traditional alphabet books for the young child, but with the addition of sign language. Although alphabet books are usually intended for preschoolers, the inclusion of sign language in this book will make it interesting through the early grades.

—Katherine Simpkins


Set in the Midwest, *Who Could Forget the Mayor of Lodi?* tells how young Lois Appleby, a second-grade teacher who wants to become a geologist, plans to spend her first summer vacation earning money. All her plans get sidetracked while she tries to help a friend, Dev Skinner, whose mother has a history of mental illness and suddenly acts as if she is a twenty-year-old. The plot shows how the girls (mainly Lois) discover the reason and provide the remedy that brings Mrs. Skinner back to reality.

The book repeatedly suggests that girls in their twenties aren't prepared to cope with mental illness, and the reader is convinced. These girls don't have the depth of character to compensate for years of experience. Aside from this weakness, the writing is never strong enough to make characters or situations come alive. Lois seems more interested in geology for the sake of adventure than because the subject fascinates her. Her interest in the earth's structure is only mentioned when she announces her future plans, and doesn't seem to be present in her everyday thinking.

The obligatory romantic interest with the mysterious young man (Paul Collingsworth) who helps Lois fix a flat tire is too predictable to be interesting, and though mental illness is a real problem, the anxiety it causes in families isn't evident or compelling enough to convince the reader that the girls are pushed to the limits of their emotional strength.

Finally, the story's problem (that Paul looked so much like his dead father that his unannounced appearance flipped Dev's mother back to her twenties because she had known Paul's father then) seems too simple. The solution is equally lacking in depth. Paul's mother, who was a girlhood friend of Dev's mother, comes to visit and to explain that Paul is her son and he looks just like his dad. Dev's mother then snaps back to the present and within minutes she recognizes her daughter, whom she hasn't known all summer.

Logically, the pieces are all there, but the writing is not convincing and the story does not become real — making it quite easy to forget the mayor of Lodi. —Lillian Heil

Gregory, the dog, is a daydreamer who likes to draw — on the window, during class on his arithmetic paper, or anywhere, anytime. He gets in trouble with his teacher, a hippopotamus, and Donald, the pig, makes fun of him in class. When the teacher tells the class to draw a still-life of a vase and flowers, Gregory's imagination runs away with him and he turns his vase into a rocket ship. He thinks he'll get in trouble again, but Adrienne, the lamb, tells him the teacher put his drawing on the wall in the middle of all the flowers.

Cazet's animal characters are appealing, and the soft-yet-colorful pastel illustrations have a daydream quality that seems to reflect Gregory's mood. Some transitions are abrupt, but this is an asset, for the reader is jerked out of daydreams along with Gregory. Text and pictures work together effectively to show that Gregory is not an outcast but a loner — because others don't quite understand him. Children will sympathize with Gregory and take pleasure in the good end to his trying school day. —Malia Howland


Angel's mother is receiving strange letters from Washington, D.C., and Angel jumps to the conclusion that the letters are from the federal government and that her mother is going to be sent to prison for not paying her taxes. Angel, her brother and a friend figure out several ways to save Mother before they finally realize that the mysterious letters are from Mother's boyfriend.

The humor is delightful throughout. The story does not deal with the heavy side of single parenthood — a factor that might have limited its readership. Some children may already be familiar with Angel from other Delton books about the family. —Lovisa Lyman


Miss Moshki's fifth-grade class invites a famous author to visit. Everyone is excited, especially Chris and Jeremy, who want to become writers themselves. Before the author arrives, the two boys can't seem to behave, so their teacher sends them out into the hallway to compose letters of apology to her and the rest of the class. As the boys write, they begin to create new excuses. When the author arrives, Miss Moshki finds and reads the boy's inventive apologies, as well as their real ones. All ends well when the boys are allowed back into class, to discover that they have given the author an idea for another book.

This highly entertaining story draws the reader into the plot from the first page, with the boys' amusing struggles with their teacher and their humorous ways of trying to solve them. The characters — Chris and Jeremy, whose active minds aren't always where they belong; bratty Nancy Jane, teacher's pet, know-it-all and all-around show-off; shy Courtney; unpretentious Doris; and their teacher, Miss Moshki, who has to handle them all — are individuals found in nearly any classroom, and readers will quickly identify with them.

The pencil-and-ink illustrations portraying the action and facial expressions help make this book enjoyable reading and fun to read aloud. Teachers and librarians may want to use this book in a variety of ways, such as a supplement when talking about favorite authors and their books. —Cathy Emickson

This was, quite amazingly, a good book. I had trouble putting it down. Seventeen-year-old Nore travels to Louisiana to spend the summer with her father and his new wife and two stepchildren, Josie and Gabe. They own an old plantation house called Shadow Grove.

Although they welcome her and are very warm and friendly, her new family is hiding a dark secret. There are unspoken conversations taking place between them, and the tension increases as Nore comes closer to discovering their secret: that they do not age and have looked exactly the same for more than a hundred years. (One wonders whether the author has intentionally or only accidentally stolen the plot from Natalie Babbit's *Tuck Everlasting*.)

As in *Tuck Everlasting*, the problem of not aging raises some interesting questions. Can you imagine being thirteen years old for a hundred years, knowing you will never outgrow your acne? *These* teenagers have some really traumatic problems.

One thing that bothered me was the fact that, even though Josie and Gabe are over a hundred years old, they still behave like teenagers. You would think they would grow up emotionally, if not physically. I guess that can be blamed on hormones.

Overall, it is a well-written story, though perhaps a little melodramatic. I liked it, even though Babbit's book remains unthreatened as the classic for this type. Duncan's story has a rather odd ending, which is only partially resolved. It is somehow appropriate, however, and leaves the reader to contemplate its lasting implications. —Karen Haroldsen Newmeyer


Behind his back Prince Horace is called Prince Brat by all the lords and ladies, as well as by the townspeople. But the whipping boy knows best what a brat the prince is. Whenever the prince plays a trick on someone or misbehaves in any way, the whipping boy receives the punishment. In school, Prince Horace refuses to learn his lessons but the whipping boy surreptitiously learns them for him.

One day the prince decides to run away. His life at the castle is so boring. But of course his whipping boy must go with him, to the displeasure of the whipping boy. They run off together into the woods, but are captured by two desperate villains (so well known that they are celebrated in ballads). The villains mistake the prince for his whipping boy and the whipping boy for the prince. Although the whipping boy tries to use this mix-up to help the prince escape, the prince refuses to recognize the plan and insists that he is the prince. However, when he cannot write his own name, the villains are convinced that the whipping boy is really the prince. The tale leads the reader to a scary chase through the city sewers and finally to the rescue of Prince Brat, who has learned many lessons. Never again will the whipping boy be whipped for the prince's mischief. And all live happily ever after.

This delightful tale of an arrogant and spiteful prince emphasizes the fact that we need friends and that a friend must show himself friendly at all times. The descriptions of the flight from Hold-Your-Nose Billy and his accomplice, Cutwater, is vivid and packed with action. It's hard to put the book down when they are racing through the sewers and trying to avoid the rats. The illustrations provide the stimulus for a child's imaginative visions of the settings and action. It's a story that will be enjoyed by young and old and would make a great read-aloud book. —Katherine Simpkins

The thirtieth anniversary of Gyo Fujikawa's illustrations of children's books is celebrated by Grossett & Dunlop with the reissue of her original Mother Goose. This volume, containing more than three hundred rhymes, has been unavailable since 1981. Previously, nearly half a million copies had been sold since its publication in 1968.

Old readers and new friends, both young and old, will welcome this edition of Mother Goose. Fujikawa's illustrations are in black-and-white as well as in color. They are sensitive and appealing interpretations of the old familiar rhymes. —Catherine Bowles


Case studies and research data illustrate the historical and philosophical concepts concerning education in the United States. The text contains statements from educators and experts in the field of education. American students, educational practices and beliefs are compared to learners, methods and opinions in other countries. The author has written more than forty books and articles for young adults and has worked with innovative educational programs.

The up-to-date information gives a brief overview of current educational issues and proposals, but does not study the issues in depth. Besides the table of contents, a further reading list and an index facilitate the location of material. Black-and-white photographs portray historical events, students and classrooms.

The book contains useful information, but the material is not presented in a thorough or outstanding manner. The quotations and citations from experts and research are not documented in detail. In addition, I doubt that the average young adult would find the text appealing unless he was very interested in the subject matter or he needed the information for a report or debate. —Alison Jueschke


"When her parents said, 'Celia, we adopted you,' it sounded no different than, 'Celia, we took you to the park when you were a baby.'" One day Celia (approximately six years old) really hears the word "adopted" and begins to have strong feelings and questions concerning her status. Little by little, when Celia is receptive, she is helped by her parents, the sitter, and her teacher to better understand and come to grips with her emotions and uncertainties about being adopted.

Numerous pencil-and-charcoal illustrations supplement the text in portraying the very real emotions of Celia. Presented in a positive, straightforward, easy-to-understand, sensitive, yet realistic manner, *Adoption Is for Always* can be read by middle elementary students by themselves or used as a tool for parents or other caring adults to help young adoptees. Even those who are not adopted children or adoptive parents can benefit from this wonderful story of love. —Diana Skousen

It is so nice when the Indians win. The Union Pacific Railroad had to be heavily guarded by USA Cavalry and fight their way across the Great Plains, while the Central Pacific gave free rides to the Indians and passed on in peace.

It is not surprising that the harassed plains Indians finally retaliated (on the 7th of August 1867), nor that they won. The bare bones of the story, while amusing, would be of no moment had Goble not placed this story in the broader context of the prophetic dream of Sweet Medicine. Today when not just the buffalo are gone but all birds and animals are threatened, Sweet Medicine's dream takes on new meaning.

Goble has, as before, used process color in addition to special mixed inks, to create an extraordinary book. —Thom Hinckley


$12.95. 200pp.

*Kim/Kimi* is seeking to find where she belongs, who she is. She looks different from all her friends, while at the same time she feels exactly the same as they do inside. Is she Kim Andrews or Kim Yogushi?

Kim's father, who was Japanese, died before she was born. In her struggle for self-identification, Kim leaves home to go to California and find her father's family. Her search takes her to Tule Lake, the site of one of the Japanese-American concentration camps during World War II. There she learns of her father's past and is able to face her own future.

Kim's search helps the reader to become more sensitive and develop a better understanding of a difficult period in our history. The characters come alive and the reader becomes involved with their problems. While some parts of Kim's search seem to fit too neatly together, the story provides an opportunity for greater comprehension of the implications of the situation and consequently a more tolerant and sympathetic attitude. —Catherine Bowles


$11.75. 217pp.

The climactic ending to *The Mystery of Dies Drear* unfolds in the conclusion to the chronicle, *The Mystery of Drear House*. Again we meet Thomas, Pesty, Pluto, Professor Small and other familiar characters. While Professor Small works to catalogue the great treasure and determine exactly what to do with it, Thomas and Pesty continue to explore Drear House with its moving walls, underground passages, hidden treasures, and the eerie feeling of someone watching.

Added characters include Thomas's great-grandmother Jeffer's, a lively, lovable eighty-year-old, and the frightening Mrs. Darrow, who stood with "...her arms crossed over her chest so that they made a wide X, with her hands touching her shoulders. Her mouth was a thin line with great creases at either side. She might have been smiling. But she was not. She was staring. Her black eyes fastened on Thomas."

For those who cannot abide not knowing what finally happens, this volume ties it all together. Like most sequels, though, it does not equal its predecessor. Fewer exciting adventures, along with less intense character development, unfortunately mar the reader's piqued expectations.
Nevertheless, I recommend *The Mystery of Drear House*, as young readers will find not only the elements of mystery but also an underlying statement on family solidarity and caring for one's fellowman. —Raphael Johnstoneaux


From the first page, there seems to be something different about Richard. His mother keeps calling him "Dickcy," which seems childish for someone with his own keys to the house. As we read on, we find that Richard is different: he is sixteen years old, living at home in a nice apartment in Manhattan, and he doesn't go to school! He has everything he could wish for. His father died and left enough money that he, his mother and older sister do not need to work. But at sixteen, Richard is bored. He goes out to find a job, but soon finds he lacks skills and training. The book is really about Richard's struggle to be a "human person" — in other words, to grow up with a handicap. It is not long before the reader realizes that Richard is mentally slow and had attended special schools until his mother took him out of school altogether.

Although the words "learning disabilities" were mentioned once as an explanation of Richard's difference, his functioning, as portrayed in the book, would seem to describe an individual with mild mental retardation. Richard comes alive for the reader and provides understanding of an individual with these differences. We really can empathize with him, through the vivid descriptions of his feelings, frustrations, fears, fancies and faith. The characterization of his faith does seem to lack some authenticity, however, while his mother's knowledge of his condition and her attitude toward him suggest a need for Social Services to intervene.

Although people do "fall through the cracks" in our many social systems, it does not seem plausible that Richard's mother, who is well educated and financially secure, would be so ignorant of Richard's rights and concerns. In 1975, PL 94–142 was passed by Congress, insuring all handicapped students the right to a free, appropriate education up to 22 years of age. The emphasis in education in recent years has been on transition — from school to work and adult living. It is disappointing that a book published in 1985 would describe Richard's feelings so well, and yet inaccurately portray the opportunities and possibilities available to a handicapped student. —Katherine Simpkins


Initially this reissue suffers by comparison with the Scribner reissues of N. C. Wyeth. The type has not been reset (as evidenced by comparison of pages 86 and 87), nor are the four-color reproductions as crisp as those done by Scribner. But for all that, the book works. As soon as I saw the jacket picture with the golden sky behind Rip and the Dutchman, I knew I was going to buy it.

When I started to re-read the story, there came flooding back a wealth of Irving detail that I had forgotten; and the detail and color transform a twice-told tale into literature of keen insight that bears periodic re-reading. In all of this, Wyeth serves Irving well — even when he out-Irvings Irving.
I have the feeling that this book presented problems in its reproduction, but it was worth it. In my school the librarian would have made me wash my hands before I'd have been allowed to read a book this beautiful. Libraries will better their collections by buying this one.

—Thom Hinckley


Lucky, a well-cared-for but unloved housecat, finds a friend in Ezra, a wise and clever mouse. They live happily until Lucky's owner sees Ezra and issues an ultimatum: "KILL IT — or you're out!" Lucky must choose between his secure home and his only friend. He risks an unknown future by leaving with Ezra, and together they face the harsh reality of the alley.

Jeschke's colorful crayon-and-pencil illustrations give an ingenious cat's-eye-view of life, as well as presenting vibrant and lovable characters. The book's jacket illustrations will capture children's attention, and the endearing tale of friendship and loyalty will carry that attention through the last page. Effective as a read-aloud as well as a read-alone book, *Lucky's Choice* will be a favorite choice for many.

—Diana Skousen


Adrienne Jones's latest young adult novel probes the dilemma of youths who survive living a "hand-to-mouth" existence in the streets. Set in contemporary Los Angeles, this novel realistically yet sensitively displays the everyday hungers faced by the homeless.

For example, Chancy arrives in L.A. having escaped Father Lembert, a self-styled fundamentalist who runs a ranch for wayward young women. Through beatings and restrictions, he coerces the girls to remain. Chancy's spunk and strong will sees her out of there and enable her to survive the odds against living alone at fifteen.

Joshua, an awkward, bespectacled fourteen-year-old who reads *The Hobbit*, escapes the terror of a stepmother and the man she marries after his father's death. Joshua and Chancy meet each other for the first time in "the Solarium," a makeshift dwelling below a Los Angeles freeway. Here they encounter the unwanted, those either physically or emotionally unable to provide for themselves. Chancy and Joshua are later joined by Martin, a pre-law student who attends classes and lives at a nearby mission, and together they struggle to survive. Initially distrusted by the Solarium regulars (Doc, Nellie, Hector and Dundee), they each slowly find an attachment to the others, and the feelings of a family begin to grow.

Jones's novel of street-wise kids who express love and understanding will prove quite successful with young adults. No graphic, disturbing scenes appear; nevertheless, the reality and truth about hundreds of thousands of dispossessed teenagers emerge to give form and meaning to many who live simply because they do not die, and to those who live with dignity even in dismal circumstances.

—Raphael Johnstoneaux


This newly-illustrated Kipling tale is very appealing. Done in warm, earthy tones with lots of gold, the uncluttered pages accent rather than overwhelm the text. The Ethiopian and the various animals are all outlined in black, so that they never quite blend into the foliage. The
only problem may be the slick cover. My experience with this type of cover is that it often cracks along the creases. —Lovisa Lyman


Another new version of an old story. Taylor's illustrations are excellent. Each stands in its own frame on a page, separated with white space from the text. The transformation of the kangaroo from a short-legged, woolly creature to the animal we know today is gradually and cleverly executed. The only drawback, again, is that the cover is the slick, crackable type. —Lovisa Lyman


Herbie and his friend Raymond, typical third-graders, do not like girls. But Herbie becomes smitten with the dreaded G (for "girl") disease when he takes get-well letters to Annabelle Hodgekiss. In his lovesick state, Herbie abandons Raymond. But when Annabelle decides to broadcast her feelings about Herbie to the whole class, it's too much for Herbie and he begins to dislike girls again. His attempts to lose Annabelle's affection are unsuccessful, however, until he defeats her in the class spelling bee.

The hilarious antics and descriptions portray common occurrences such as lunch time, spelling bees, group projects, dances and relationships among young school children. Herbie confuses words and says "tie rod clam" instead of thyroid gland, and "Carl Hamburger" instead of Carl Sandburg. The boys also mistake their teacher's grocery list for the spelling list.

Black-and-white illustrations depict certain comic situations, such as when Raymond spies and when Herbie gives Annabelle a rejection letter. Furthermore, the colored cover should capture the attention of young readers.

The style resembles Beverly Cleary's in her *Ramona* books. Children should relate to the experiences described and will enjoy reading or listening to the story. —Alison Jueschke


This factual account of one heroic woman's struggle to save homeless and unwanted Jewish children from the ravages of Nazism and the intolerance of their Polish countrymen adds to the chronicle of courageous, unselfish, loving human beings during the holocaust. Fighting against almost impossible odds and under dire conditions, Lena Kuchler-Silberman emerges as a woman small in stature but mighty in spirit. She refuses no child in need and constantly risks her life to provide them with food and shelter.

The account moves along as rapidly as any well-planned fictional plot and carries the reader into the war-torn hearts and lives of the people. Though fearing the Gestapo and her frightened countrymen as well, Lena nevertheless sneaks through darkened streets, confronts public officials, and considers no endeavor too dangerous if she can secure food, shelter, and eventually passports for the children she plans to smuggle out of Poland.

Her strength to prevail against seemingly impossible odds shows again how love and the will to live can transcend prejudice, hatred and death. Lena Kuchler-Silberman presently resides in Tel Aviv, Israel, where descendants of the children she saved now call her
"grandmother." I readily recommend this book to both young and adult readers.
—Raphael Johstoneaux


Mather Seton and his wife, Dr. Wallis Hamilton, bring their cargo of four blue Lehr cats from the Beta Geminorum II on board the interstellar luxury cruiser, Valkyrie. Soon afterwards, bodies start showing up, murdered in rather grisly fashions and somehow drained of blood — with a tuft of blue fur clutched in their fists. Evidence indicates that the cats killed them, but how? They could not have escaped from the plasteel cages and force shields while being watched by the latest in surveillance technology. Did the cats do it? Or is a maniac loose on the ship? Or is it (as Dr. Hamilton is inclined to think) a vampire?

This futuristic whodunit is a departure from the author's well-known Deryni series, fantasies consisting of three trilogies and a collection of short stores. With her newest novel, Kurtz shows her ability to build the plot with tense situations and lively dialogue, inviting the reader into the story in spite of its weaknesses. Though the reader may be able to solve the mystery halfway through the book, there are some surprises and intriguing plot twists.

Calm, sensible Mather Seton and his equally calm and sensible wife must deal with such characters as Captain Luboto, who is far from happy with transporting the cats; Dr. Shivaun Shannon, a reluctant participant in the murder investigations; Vander Torrell, egotist and resident authority on most anything, especially Lehr cats; as well as efficient Rangers, overbearing officials, frightened aliens and a benevolent prince: the usual assortment of either agreeable or disagreeable personalities that would be found on a luxury liner or even in a Deryni kingdom. The author tends not to vary her characterization to any great length from book to book, an attribute which may disturb some readers.

The illustrations by Michael Kaluta are black-and-white ink drawings. Nearly all of them are too small and too cluttered to make out much detail, and so do not add much to the story.

Those who have enjoyed Kurtz's fantasy novels may find her venture into science fiction a pleasant alternative. Others can discover a comfortable science fiction novel that is also an enjoyable murder mystery — not great literature, but fun reading, nonetheless.
—Cathy Errickson


Why do teenagers commit suicide? How can you help a friend who is suicidal? *Dead Serious* addresses these and other pertinent questions about teen suicide. Leder begins with a chillingly detailed case history, then moves on to discuss the statistics, causes, myths and warning signs of teenage suicide. Building on this foundation and using numerous real-life examples, she shows the painfulness of suicide for victims and survivors, but offers the hope of prevention. She teaches specific techniques for listening and talking to friends who may be suicidal.

Leder, whose brother committed suicide, achieves a serious but never heavy conversational tone that reveals a respect for, and an understanding of, young adults. She never glamorizes suicide or places blame, but portrays it as a tragedy that can be prevented. Leder does not claim to be an expert on young-adult suicides, but she gives valuable information and practical
advice, using a simple, straightforward style. Bibliographies of nonfiction and fiction direct young adults to additional sources of information.

*Dead Serious* encourages teenagers to take an active role in suicide prevention and tells them where they can seek help for themselves or for friends. The book effectively communicates information that should be available in every library that serves young adults.

—Malia Howland


I am usually turned off by much of MTV's programming, but for those who are not, and there seem to be quite a few, this book will be a helpful guide to understanding what you are seeing as well as a how-to guide for creating your own videos. The entire process, from storyboards to editing, is covered.

The authors include details of equipment rental and functions (which can be quite complicated to most of us), as well as how to master simple special effects. Tips in cutting costs: using play-dough for mike stands and using existing sets (community theatres, etc.). They explain how to avoid possible legal entanglements — for example, getting proper authorization to use recorded, professional music. There is even the address of a national contest and career information.

The only shortcoming of the entire work was that the technical information presented in the equipment chapters began to sound like an article for *Consumer Reports*. All in all, a well-written account. —Richard Lee


Meltzer's carefully-written biography of George Washington reflects some of the same qualities he attributes to the first President of the United States. Washington's ability to hold an army and a nation of diverse interests together was a quality sorely needed by the American colonies, who wanted to govern themselves but did not know how to do so.

Meltzer's Washington is a quiet, large-statured man whose integrity and fairness were unquestioned. His was not a dramatic voice, but he appeared to be an excellent listener. His letters reveal a man who loved his family dearly and was responsible for the well-being of an extended family. Surprisingly, he noticed all the pretty ladies from youth to his last years. Meltzer shows that Washington was not an aristocrat, but details the process by which young George became associated with the wealthy and used their influence to further his ambitions.

The war years brought an incredible list of hardships, but Washington believed in the cause of establishing a free nation. Meltzer gives a detailed account of the war's campaigns and battles, making the reader wonder how the American forces could lose so many battles and still win the war.

Washington's dogged determination was first shown when he was twenty-three, as an assistant to the British major-general Edward Braddock. The dying Braddock insisted that Washington ride forty miles back to bring reinforcements, and though Washington had been in the losing battle near Fort Duquesne for twelve hours, he carried out the command even though he sometimes was on hands and knees to find the trail through the woods.
The intellectual skirmishes in the framing of the Constitution, and in his years as President, are much less detailed, perhaps because the compromises and negotiations in a public office are much less visible than the battles in a war.

Meltzer’s biography is readable, interesting, and carefully researched. I feel as if I’d been introduced to George Washington, the man behind the myth. He wasn’t perfect, but he had qualities needed desperately by the thirteen colonies who became a nation with a lot of help from a man who deserves the title of Father of His Country. —Lillian Heil


Americans’ don’t like to think about the problem of poverty. It’s not part of their belief in the hard work ethic that is supposed to produce a prosperous person. Meltzer methodically and carefully shows the effects and extent of poverty in the USA. He compares the amount spent (15% of the gross national product) in America to the amount spent in European countries that had poverty problems following World War II (Denmark spent 60% of their GNP; Sweden spent about 66%).

Meltzer is convinced that help for the poor does not create a welfare class who want to be supported by the government. He says the studies show that ninety percent of the women who received help from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in the 1960s or 70s were helped for short periods of time. The average was twelve months. He is convinced that most families stay on welfare only if they have no other way to stay alive.

Whether or not the reader agrees with Meltzer’s views on poverty, his comparisons with other countries and their responses to the problem are an eye-opener. His thesis that the work ethic of the United States is adding to the problems faced by the poor makes logical sense, and this book is a well-researched course for discussions of the issue by young people in the public schools. —Lillian Heil


This is a fairly accurate account of Incan life, but only the first chapter talks about Atahualpa, the ruler at the time the Spaniards arrived in Peru. The remainder of the book deals with Peru before the Incan empire, the birth of the empire and its demise. Included are some details about archaeological finds in Peru, including Machu Picchu.

The text is fleshed out with full-color illustrations, drawings made by early Spanish conquerors, maps and photographs. A table of dates, an index and a short bibliography make it a good choice for a child with a report due on Peru.

The only disappointment is that the book, despite its title, is not about Atahualpa.

—Lovisa Lyman


One of the Franklin Watts “Picture Library” editions, this book is heavy on large, clear, color photographs and illustrations depicting fighting ships of all nations and classes. The carefully-worded text describes functions and firepower in terms easily understood by young readers.

Norman includes a brief history, descriptions of famous sea battles, a glossary, and a helpful index that is a great teaching tool in how to use an index. A fine juvenile reference source or browse selection. —Richard Lee

Patterson’s well-researched, well-organized biography begins with Jefferson’s birth and genealogy and follows his eventful life through his death and epitaph. Not only are the facts concerning Jefferson’s life, political career and achievements presented, but also the feelings, the whys and the hows behind those facts. We see Jefferson as he sees himself, as well as how his contemporaries and history see him. The picture is one of a truly amazing, intellectual, insightful and talented man whose contributions and influence are very much a part of the life and history of the United States.

*Thomas Jefferson* is part of the "First Book" series of Franklin Watts. It includes a preface, a further-readings list, a helpful index, and several pertinent photographs from the collection of the Library of Congress. Young adults (as well as adults) will enjoy this enlightening biography and slice of history. —Diana Skousen


Zella, a zebra, saves and raises Zack, a helpless ostrich chick. She teaches Zack how to survive and protects him from the perils of the African wilderness, and later, Zack returns Zella’s kindness by saving her child, Zodiac, from the dangerous lions.

The appealing crayon-and-colored-pencil illustrations convey the emotions of astonishment, fright, grumpiness and bewilderment described in the text. The comical pictures also effectively portray the herd’s galloping movements, Zodiac’s awkward stumbles, and the lion’s unsuccessful lunge. This friendship tale equals the quality of Bill Peet’s other works.

The humorous rhyming style provides an enjoyable read-aloud story. The work can also be used for animal, African and poetry units, as well as for units on friendship and human relations. —Alison Jueschke


This well-known book for young children tells the story of Brian Hanson, a preschool teacher who was paralyzed in a sporting accident in college. The photographs parallel the story and show Brian at school, at home, with friends. The text deals with those issues a young child might question. Why can’t he walk? Can I catch it? What are some nice things about having a teacher in a wheelchair? What are some not-so-nice things? How does he get to school? What is he like at home? Does his mommy get his breakfast? Is Brian sad about his accident? Will he get better? Well, he is my friend and teacher, anyway.

This is a beautifully written book with insight into the minds of young children and what they would want to know about individual differences. It carefully teaches the meanings of strange words (e.g., paralysis) and, through the text and photographs, truthfully presents answers to children’s questions about a handicap. It would be a very valuable book to add to a collection of titles introducing children to the lives of handicapped people. It could also be useful in creating dialogue about individual differences and how we each cope.

—Katherine Simpkins

This is a biographical account of Amelia Earhart's life, her passion for flying and her mysterious disappearance during her attempted flight around the world.

Amelia grew up in Kansas, and her childhood was not a very happy one. Her father drank excessively, and her parents had marital problems, separating and then getting back together several times. She and her sister learned to cope by cultivating their imaginations.

Amelia was first introduced to the airplane at a Long Beach, California, air show. She immediately wanted to learn to fly, and did so, earning her pilot's license in the early 1920s. She acquired a small plane and began setting records in flying. In 1928, she was the first woman to cross the Atlantic Ocean, although as a passenger. She later determined to fly it solo.

Amelia married George Putnam, and he always supported her and managed her career. It was his encouragement that gave her the motivation to attempt her last fateful flight. What happened during that flight — whether the plane was ditched in the ocean or was shot down or captured — remains a mystery. However, Amelia's life of courage and determination is a great lesson to all.

I enjoyed reading this book immensely. It would be a very good way to introduce a young reader to the world of nonfiction books. —Elaine Taylor


Eleven-year-old Amy is always hungry and thirsty and tired. She is admitted to the hospital when she becomes violently ill — and learns she has diabetes. She is scared, but she learns to test her blood sugar and give herself shots. Amy feels sorry for herself when she goes home and must deal with family and friends who can eat sugar, but she finally accepts the responsibility for her care and stops looking for sympathy.

Roberts, herself a diabetic, uses simple prose and Amy's point of view to explain the facts about diabetes as well as explore the emotional and social impacts of the disease. Amy's emotions ring true as she moves from confusion to anger to acceptance.

Though *Sugar Isn't Everything* is fiction, its informational value is strong, for it provides details about diabetes and its treatment. Medical explanations are clear and complete, and a short glossary defines unfamiliar terms. This is an effective and entertaining tool for educating both the diabetic and his or her peers about diabetes. —Malia Howland


This is a fine book, but it is not a children's book. It is a biography that can best be appreciated by a young adult or adult reader who loved Beatrix Potter as a child (or by someone like me, who saw the PBS series on Potter and wanted to know the rest of the story).

Potter was much more versatile and complex than I had imagined. Born to wealth, she never had to be concerned about supporting herself. She began to write and draw to entertain the children of relatives and friends. Against her parents' wishes, she self-published and marketed her first book, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, at the age of twenty-five. By the time she was thirty-five, her "little books," as she called them, were selling in the millions. Again against
her parents' wishes, she became secretly engaged to her publisher. His sudden death was devastating to her.

She coped with her grief by continuing to write while increasing her holdings in the Lake District. In middle age, she married her solicitor, and together they managed her various farms. During her last twenty years, her eyesight failing, she gave up writing and drawing altogether and devoted her full time to her farms and to breeding Herdwick sheep.

Taylor, a children's editor, has captured Potter's character in her generously documented and illustrated book. —Lovisa Lyman


Tocci's experience as a high-school science teacher gives this book credibility; however, his smooth writing style makes it a book that young adults will read from cover to cover — not just as a reference book. The author captures the reader's interest by comparing the investigative work of scientists with the investigative work of the great detective, Sherlock Holmes. The successful scientist, like Holmes, carefully observes the world in which he lives, gathering clues and information.

How to Do a Science Fair Project tells the serious science student not only how to choose an award-winning project, but everything from how to collect information and materials to how to present his project before the judges. Although Tocci does not guarantee that the project will win a prize, he does guarantee that a well-done project will bring inner satisfaction.

The book has an index for easy reference, and many photographs of actual science projects. It is a worthwhile book for any junior-high or high-school student to read before beginning a science fair project. —Annette Evans


Moving with his family to King's Eaton, a somewhat isolated village, forces Alan Dollis, the young hero of Townsend's latest novel, to spend much time alone. There he finds himself trapped in an emotional labyrinth — those "in-betweens" before starting at a new school, learning to drive, understanding his parents, and controlling his basic desires.

His parents employ a German tutor to help him before school starts. Instead of the stereotypical "Frau" one might expect, however, Vivien turns out to be the object of Alan's yearnings. His immaturity places him in a devastating position, as he fails to read the early signs of his parents' marital problems and his father's own romantic interest in Vivien.

Passion, immaturity, innocence, experience, and great emotional pain all come together in a powerful and extremely revealing ending that marks the end of Alan's rite of passage into the more sophisticated world of adults. Townsend's novel realistically portrays many high-school students' domestic and internal turmoil and, like many novels of its type, offers insight for mature readers. —Raphael Johstoneaux

At the end of a long list of those singled out for 'special thanks' in the production of this book is the emphatic italic inscription: "and to Jörg Müller for the inspiration." Strange source of inspiration. Müller's title, in free translation, was *Here fell a house, there stood a crane, and eternally droned the bulldozer, or The Changing City*. To make sure that his message was not lost even in translation, he placed, in each of his eight cityscapes, a blind man — and it is in the life (and death) of the blind man that Müller expresses his own view of change, just as in *The Changing Country* the white cat is the symbol of the author's true opinion. In the last scene, the cat is about to be run over, and Müller ironically places a billboard nearby that reads: "Life in Gülten becomes more beautiful...." In contrast, Von Tscharner's *New Providence* survives all the dehumanization and comes out more beautiful and functional, thanks to the efforts of modern planners. Seems a bit too euphoric.

In the 1930s, city planners learned Burgess's concentric-ring model of cities and tried to zone their towns to look that way. When that failed, they learned Hoyt's model, and more recently Ulman's model, but did not stop to consider that city form is generated by the available transportation. We have only begun to look at capital flows and their effect on town planning. Without knowing deep structures, planning can, as Alice Coleman suggested, become a failure.

Should we heed Müller's warning voice, or does Fat City (as Von Tscharner suggests) really sometimes rise from the dirt and débris to become a beautiful, functional container for human life? —Thom Hinckley


Another Windsor book, *The Sandman's Eyes*, is a particular favorite of mine, so I was looking forward to this one. The story is about a young girl, Martha, who is trying to continue to fit into her group at school as she finds her own interests changing and becomes friendly with a boy everyone labels as a "weirdo." Little by little, she discovers that her interests are more like the weirdo's than they are like her old friends'. As she comes to know and accept herself, she finds she is able to stand up for someone who isn't popular.

So far so good. The problem with the book is that one of the interests Martha shares with Teddy (the weirdo) is their mutual fascination with a Ouija board. I don't feel comfortable with this, and other parents may not, either. If it weren't for this detail — and be warned the story hinges on the children's conversations with an irrational ghost — the book would be quite appealing. —Lovisa Lyman