Book Reviews

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Green is the color of Spring, and Arnold Adoff’s poetry book, *Greens*,

Will
Pull you into the
   Next season
Will
Pull you into
   A
Green Spring

You’ll do the “green grasshopper hop all day long song.” You’ll run on green grass and feel it “wrinkling” under your feet; play with the “green garden hose” get stuck in the mud in the “Green Truck” as you follow green through Spring, Summer, Winter and on beyond. Adoff’s book is filled with the sensory feel of green starting with the seasons and extending the meaning of the color to fantasy, foods and all kinds of green things. It’s a joyous rhyme filled celebration of

My green pen writing green
   Words that please and rhyme
   And mean I am doing my best
All the rest is other colors for another time.

Betsy Lewin’s watercolor illustration join the celebration and show the many shades of green in her free and exuberant drawings of leaves, grass, trees, and green things.

— Lillian Heil


Rebecca has just seen a moose in the garden. When she comes into the house to tell her family, she is ignored by her brother who is building a scarecrow for the garden, her father who is watching TV, and her mother who is painting the walls (an interesting distribution of chores, don’t you think?) As she goes from one family member to another to report her
finding, she is disappointed to find that no one believes her. In the meantime, the moose is slowly eating up all the vegetables in the garden. Rebecca tries to scare the moose away by herself, and finally, he just walks off — about the time her family all come outside. Seeing the devastated garden, they try to question Rebecca, but now, the shoe is on the other foot, and she is too busy to tell them.

As an adult, I liked the ending. It helps to put into perspective the feelings of children and the importance of listening to them and responding to their needs. However, I do not like the message of the book from the child’s point of view. We are leaving them with the impression that parents don’t care, only when it is convenient for them. Reading it from a child’s point of view left me cold, with little hope for a more open communication between parent and child.

I thought that the illustrations, however, were quite wonderful. Rebecca is a little pixie-type girl with lots of expression (except that her mouth is wide open on every page). Most of the pages are white making the action really stand out. Only when the action is in the garden do we see the background filled in with details. A very interesting and effective portrayal.

If this book is read to a child, I suggest that there be some discussion about why parent’s can’t always drop everything and run when a child comes with a seemingly unbelievable story. We had no previous evidence that Rebecca had spent her “youth” “crying wolf,” so why didn’t they believe her? — Helen Hoopes


Ashabranner and his daughter Julie, the photographer, have given us an incredible glimpse into the emotions and people behind the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Ashabranner does well in his attempt to focus on the memorial, not the war. He gives the young reader enough information to understand the struggle to get the memorial built, without overloading with facts and statistics about the war. (If desired, this can be obtained from the fact summary sheet at the back.) He simply describes the bitter dissension in America over the war, and the struggle of the veterans and supporters to build the memorial.

Ashabranner visited the memorial many times and interviewed the people involved in its creation, from Maya Ying Lin, the 21 year old Chinese-American undergraduate student (designer), to Jan Scruggs (the moving force behind the memorial). He also talked to people who visited the memorial. Ashabranner’s narrative, conversational style allows the emotions to come through strongly. The story of the ten year old boy who, after reading all of the notes, and examining all of the mementos he could see, left his own tribute, a small blue marble, brought tears to my eyes each time I read it. The black and white photos,
sprinkled liberally throughout, add to the sense of honor and respect conveyed by the text. Most children will not remember the Vietnam War, and may need the help of a parent or teacher to fully understand the impact, but even a young reader will feel the love and life radiating from within this book. For this is not a dreary discussion of war, but a celebration of love, life, and honor. — Emily Allred


Fifteen-year-old Paige Truitt does not want to follow in his father’s footsteps and take over the family apple farm. Instead, he wants to move to Boston and become a detective. Then he meets thirteen-year-old Abby Winch who has come to visit her grandparents for the summer. Abby has a way of seeing the farm differently. At first, Paige is annoyed with Abby’s fancy words and her excessive talking, but later he decides to risk having her as a friend, even though it means making his girlfriend Cade jealous. Through his friendship with Abby, Paige begins to see life on the farm differently, and as the summer progresses, Paige finds he does love the farm and sees that the future is his to build upon.

An enjoyable story of inward struggle and growth, and of a friendship which develops in the apple farm country of Maine. — Terry Jensen


After her graduation from high school, Lynn Paget and her mother, Dorrie, leave Belmont, Massachusetts to travel to the Louisbourg National Historic Park on Cape Brenton, Nova Scotia, to spend the Summer. Dorrie has been hired to take photographs, and Lynn to work in the park as an animator (one who assumes the identity of one of the original colonists giving tours of the old fort). Somehow, she suddenly finds herself in 1744 Louisbourg. From there on, the book revolves around Lynn’s new life as Elisabeth Bernard, the person Lynn had been portraying. After the death of her mother, Elisabeth and her brothers and sisters have been taken (against the wishes of her father) into the home of her grandmother. Her uncle is a baker and much of Lynn’s new life involves working in the bakery and dealing with the problems of a large, colonial family. Also of note is the fact that two other people, whom Lynn meets in Louisbourg, have also been transported back in time.

This is a fascinating story, and, as Nancy Bond points out in her “Note” at the beginning of the book, it is based on life in the real Louisbourg in 1744. The book is full of action and most compelling. I could hardly put it down. You feel driven to find out how Bond is going to resolve the time-travel problem, and if Lynn is going to be able to make it back to
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1983.

There are a few words of caution: when the action is taking place in 1983, there are a couple of times when the characters say a few "*?#^! words; and, during the 1744 action, there is a scene where we learn that two of the main characters have slept together. Except for these two incidents, the book is well-written and very entertaining. At times, the main character finds her mind bouncing back and forth between being Lynn and being Elisabeth. We are acutely aware of the conflict that she feels, but Lynn never loses her own identity to Elisabeth. Bond makes this very praiseworthy. Save for the exceptions noted above, I highly recommend this book. — Helen Hoopes


The Gremlin who lives in our book review room is always playing tricks. During the Statue of Liberty Centennial, I kept looking for the definitive account of the rebuilding of the Grand Lady, but the Gremlin must have been reading it all this time. This is the book.

The photographs, both historical and current, are intriguing. The details of the restoration of the statue, which are accurately given, were particularly interesting. The history of the Statue of Liberty is, at times, incredible: “William M. Evarts persuaded President Cleveland and Congress to appropriate $60,000 to pay for the dedication ceremonies and for the maintenance of the statue as a lighthouse.”

This book, like the Statue, is interesting and is worth seriously considering if you do not already have it. — Thom K. Hinckley


How does an eight-year-old boy leave his world of school games and toy cars to enter into the world of a lonely old woman? Tino’s first reaction to the elderly Mrs. Sunday is to tease and torment her from the safe distance of the street as he runs by each day after school. He comes to learn of her friendliness, and of her friendlessness, and to understand how nice a memory can be — not an easy accomplishment for a small child who lives very much in the present. Through his friendship with someone so different from himself, Tino learns what it means to give.

Buscaglia writes a pleasant (though not original or striking) tale of friendship between the young and old; of giving, and of understanding those who live outside our sphere of day-to-day life. Although he attempts to teach the young reader about what memories are with his additional discussion questions at the back of the book, the lesson is only average. Illustrations are crisp and finely drawn. — Valerie Holladay

Hugh and Zee have been “buddies” since the fourth grade, and now, seventeen-year-old Hugh can not figure out why his normally out-going, tomboyish, best friend has become withdrawn. So, on their “official” first date, Hugh regretfully asks, “What’s been bugging you lately?” Zee only cries. Later she tells a more confused Hugh that she is pregnant. Now two people know her secret, but it can’t be kept a secret much longer. Jodie Slater, local “Wonder Boy” and father-to-be, will not admit to it. Can Hugh now give up his dream to become a world famous author and settle down to be the father to his best friend’s baby?

This is a story of true friendship, love and commitment. Ms. Calvert presents characters that are real and people with whom the reader can truly relate. — Terry Jensen


Jesse Bear is like most young creatures, he likes to play in the water. This delightful little book follows Jesse through all the adventures of a regular day as he seems to be pulled by the “magnetism” of water. He tries to play in the water while his mother is mopping the floor, he slops around in the dish water, grabs the goldfish out of the bowl, plays with the garden hose, tries to help the bird take a bath in the birdbath, waters a worm with his dad’s watering can, tries to follow a frog into the river, and throws pebbles into the pond to see the ripples. After each incident, either his mother or father tell him: “Better not get wet, Jesse Bear.” Finally, his father fills up Jesse’s wading pool and as he jumps in, he is told: “Better get all wet, Jesse Bear.”

The illustrations are fun: from the wrinkles in Papa Bear’s forehead to Mama Bear’s sandals. At the end, when Jesse is finally allowed to get wet, he is surrounded by all the other creatures he has helped to get wet — the worm, the bird, the swan, the goldfish (looking out from the patio door) and the frog. Kids who like water will love this book. They may wonder why Jesse spent the whole day being told not to get in the water when they discover that he had his swimming suit on all along, but maybe that is just the adult in me coming out. — Helen Hoopes


Eleven-year-old Belle Pruitt’s infant brother dies suddenly, and her mother withdraws
into depression. Belle attempts to help her mother by arranging for Aunt George (a
domineering woman) to come and take over the mother’s responsibilities. This backfires.

Vera Cleaver has created Belle to be a non-creative character — a girl who lacks work
ethics, and digs herself a “shirking ditch” in which to hide when the occasion demands,
then transforms the uncreative Belle to a strong member of the Pruitt family. A moving
story on family character. — Leona Giles

728460-3. $13.95. Unpaginated.

Nellie is a typical child who does not like peas. At the demand of her parents, Nellie is
told to eat her peas. She boldly tells them that there are many other things that she would
rather eat. Then, page by page, she shares with us her preferences: a big, furry spider; a
wet, slimy salamander; a hairy warthog, a pair of aardvarks; a python; a big old crocodile;
a water buffalo; a lion; a giraffe; and an elephant. Then, her parents tell her to drink her
milk, but there are other things that she would rather drink.

This book is rather clever and I loved the illustrations (The color of the peas is reflected
throughout the book in all shades of green.), but I wonder if young children would like the
idea of eating all these interesting animals. The imaginative five-year-old I read this book
to had to have explanations for many of the animals and could not imagine eating such
creatures. Perhaps the older child would enjoy the fantasy more. We did like the little ants
that marched from page to page carrying the peas through the swamps and the jungles, up
trees and down rocks, floating across the river on leaves, and marching down the long neck
of the giraffe into their ant hill (and the one peaking out from behind the roll basket on
Nellie’s dinner table). Every page has some fun little extra illustrations to keep even the
adult reader interested (flies buzzing around the water buffalo’s tail; the big, old crocodile
trying to hide under the little leaf; the expression on the aardvarks faces as Nellie swings
through the trees, fork in hand; etc. A delightful book for the child with a vivid imagina-
tion. — Helen Hoopes

nated.

Little Tommy knew early that he wanted to be an artist when he grew up. He practiced
continually. His art was on the walls of his home, the barber shop where his dad worked,
and in his grandparents’ grocery store. Finally, he was old enough to start school — but art
in the classroom was not what he hoped. The paint was runny. He had only one piece of
paper and could not have more. He was not allowed to bring his own box of 64 crayons,
but had to use the eight colors provided by the school. Worse, he had to draw the same
pilgrim couple the rest of the class was required to produce. Finally, a compromise was made and he could draw what he wanted after completing the pilgrim picture. And he did.

Fortunately, this autobiographical look at dePaola's early years does not mirror all elementary classes in today's schools. Unfortunately it parallels still too many. The Art Lesson is for the children who can see how one person chose early his life's work. It is also for the teacher, who can better see how to adapt art lessons into the daily curriculum. And, it is for the parent who can see how to support and encourage young minds. Finally, it is for anyone who wants to learn more about the life of a prolific artist. — James S. Jacobs


"Barney the bear had a cake." On top of it were five cherries. Walking around outdoors, Barney prepares to eat the delicious-looking cake. However, he is approached by five separate creatures who each want one of the cherries: a wasp (that looks very much like a bumblebee), a mouse, a crow, a squirrel, and a fox. Somewhat reluctantly, Barney allows them each to take a cherry. At last, he is met by a big bear named Buster (who looks like he could have been Barney's dad) who demands the little cake itself. I guess by now, Barney is a little tired of being taken-advantage-of and he sticks up for his own rights.

The illustrations in this book are quite delightful — vibrant, warm, fuzzy colors. The five little "beggars" have a way of subtly showing up one page before they approach Barney for a cherry so that alert little readers will be able to find the clue as to who will ask for a cherry next. — Helen Hoopes


Originally published in England by Walker Books in 1988, this is a delightful picture book without words. It is the story of a little man who escapes from jail and is pursued through the streets of a busy city by the jailers. We do not know his name or what he was imprisoned for, but we do see all the fun he goes through to keep from being captured by his pursuers. As we follow him, page after page, he ducks into a department store, a museum and a theater; then leaps across the roof tops of the city into a hospital and a movie studio; he briefly joins a circus and a fox hunt; he attends a wedding in a church, eats at a fine restaurant and finally makes the "great escape."

Children will sit for hours making up the story and observing all the little details of this "comic-book-type" illustrated book. There's lots of action (Dupasquier has managed to
make the characters look like they are actually in motion) and lots of surprises. It is the kind of book that could be used again and again, because each time, a different story could be made up to go along with these colorful, fun illustrations. — Helen Hoopes


Poetry all ages

This collection contains forty-two of the most familiar Mother Goose Rhymes. These are illustrated by several well-known illustrators from the past: L. Leslie Brooke, Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane, and Arthur Rackham. Each artist uses his/her own style, imagination, and interpretation. The result is variety, contrast, and comparisons of style and media. All the illustrations have a flavor of the past and seem appropriate. They enhance the rhyme. An excellent book to have in your library and to use with children. — Catherine Bowles


Poetry 5+

Artist Ed Young has created a beautiful and imaginative blending of pictures with the thoughts expressed in Frost’s well-loved poem, opening *Birches* to the understanding and enjoyment of youngsters. Adults will enjoy it, too. In imagination, one can be a swinger of birches in a snowy wood. — Carol V. Oaks


Nonfiction 3-7

From the earliest roof hole or narrow slit, there have been windows in buildings. James Giblin tells how windows protect us, how they inspire us, and the role they have played in dramatic moments in world history. The first windows had no covering; hence, the name window (literally wind’s eye) was particularly appropriate because the opening let in as much wind as it did light.

Giblin describes windows from all over the world, from the wooden grill-covered windows of southern Spain, to the paper covered screens in Japan. He describes the history of stained glass windows whose designers felt they were inspired of God, and the sudden destruction of those works of art when followers of Martin Luther and subjects of Henry VII began to smash stained glass windows all over England and Europe. Completing the book are sections on windows that go up and down, and the development of panes.
of glass big enough to make modern buildings that are all windows.

Giblin’s clear descriptions of the uses of openings and their coverings, intertwined with important historical events, is enhanced by excellent photographs. A colored set of more than half a dozen photographs shows the beauty of stained glass windows.

Giblin has shown how the development of the window was a matter of accident and design, how the cramped space in a small country encouraged the invention of windows that move up and down, and how their beauty has inspired both love and hatred. Don’t miss this excellent example of how practical living, art, religion, and politics all intertwine in *Let There Be Light*. — Lillian Heil


Unfortunately, I was not among the 45,000 people who visited the Bears in Wareham last year, nor have I seen the Bears on the TV. The fact that the Bears are real, and do live in a house so that one can go see them is part of the charm of the stories, and makes me wish that I had been to Bears’ House.

When the Bears came to Wareham, they had no place to stay. Little Mutt, who wears an orthopaedic boot, with imagination and work raised £10,000 to buy number 18 Church Street.

Since Annabel is a terror, *All About Annabel* is more than one wants to know. “She was so naughty she got posted back to Wareham in a parcel” marked, “NOT FRAIL” and “DO NOT RETURN.”

*Little Mutt and Scrum* is a touching love story that has to be savoured, not described. I have read it four times because it is so tantalising. Miss Pizzi Carter is, to the concert piano, what Florence Foster Jenkins was to opera.

In *Magnus and Miss Evans*, another love story, the final pages reads:

> Magnus is a wonderful father taking a turn at everything [with the triplets]. Magnus and Mrs. Magnus have discovered all one needs for happiness is bread and butter, with the occasional glass of champagne, but the best of all, is bread and butter …
When you're in with someone
And they're in with you
It doesn't really matter if there isn't much to do.

One has the feeling of being privileged to enter an intimate, miniature world where love and caring abound. Reading these books is like coming to one of the classics for the first time; what they say inside exceeds what the words say on the page.

These books are my favourite find of the year. They are well worth any hassle it may take to order direct and pay in sterling. — Thom K. Hinckley


Jarrel’s village is attacked and destroyed by Prince Mephtik, and Jarrel is the only survivor. With his friend, Archer, a giantess with a telekinetic Talent, Jarrel must escape the Wellwood Forest. However, before they can reach safety, the two of them are captured and Prince Mephtik scratches the letter “M” on Jarrel’s chest with his Tainted Blade. Twelve-year-old Jarrel is doomed to die at the next full moon.

The rebel wizard, Cryl, knowing of Jarrel’s yet undeveloped Talent, sends Scythe (a blind warrior with the Talent to “see” with his mind) and the Lady Mandragorina (with the telepathic Talent to create illusions) to save Archer and Jarrel. This small band becomes their world’s last hope in overthrowing the evil powers which control it. They undertake a perilous journey to the heart of Prince Mephtik’s kingdom to overturn the sentence of death that has been placed on Jarrel, for his unknown Talent, as foretold by the wizard, is to be the most powerful Talent of all, and his life must be saved if the world is to survive.

Throughout this fantasy adventure, Jarrel learns to overcome his fears by standing up to them. Jarrel learns that being brave does not mean he must be unafraid, he must simply learn to go on and not let fear overtake him.

I found this book compelling and intriguing. An enjoyable fantasy adventure. Mr. Hill has an art for drawing pictures in the mind with his words. — Terry Jensen


Medea may be a fascinating character study for students of Greek literature, but Hoover’s portrayal of Medea’s life in *The Dawn Palace* chronicles a life of murder, magic, obsessive passion, and insanity which teachers and parents may not wish to recommend to their students and children. Although carefully researched and skillfully written, Hoover’s adolescent novel is not for this age group: Medea betrays her father to help Jason steal the sacred Golden Fleece, watches Jason brutally massacre her unsuspecting younger brother who pursues them, uses her magic to murder two kings in order to give their kingdoms to
Jason, and at last finds her children slaughtered by Jason, after she herself has viciously set fire to his fiancée and to the palace Medea had given him. The plot and setting, although finely detailed, do not excite the reader who is not interested in sharing the misadventures of a young girl’s foolish and blind devotion for an obviously self-centered and vain glory-seeker. Thus, Medea as a central character does not satisfy, nor do any of the other characters who take a lesser place and consequently are not developed.

While the historical or literary aspects may be of interest to some readers, the tone and content require a more sophisticated reader; however, a reader of that caliber would be capable and desirous of reading the original Greek myths and legends. —Valerie Holladay


In James Howe’s biography of Carol Burnett, the reader is introduced to one of the comedy queens of the entertainment world. Howe’s sympathetic portrayal explains the problem Burnett’s parents had with alcohol, but shows the genuine affection in the family and the way Carol Burnett used acting, both as an escape and a catharsis, for the tragedy in her personal life. Little is said about her children except to note that daughter Carrie had a struggle with a drug problem. The same is true of both her first and second husbands; both of whom she divorced. Carol is the focus of this book.

This short biography (58 pages) is very readable, but the tragedy and triumph of Carol’s life do not come alive for the reader. The illustrations aren’t much help; they almost resemble Carol but never manage to capture the essence of her appearance or spirit. They interfere with the text as the reader mentally notes that they don’t look like Carol Burnett. While Howe’s biography is not great, it is informative and accurately chronicles the life of one of the women of our time. —Lillian Heil


Set in the northern seas of Great Britain, Mollie Hunter’s tale of two children, Anna and Jon, who get the best of the vain, but powerful mermaid living near their village, is a spellbinder from start to finish. The trouble begins when the children’s grandfather, Eric Anderson, makes fun of the village belief in the evil mermaid. When the mermaid’s attempt to drown him is unsuccessful, Eric admits that she is real and knows he must leave the village because he can no longer enter the waters ruled by a mermaid who wants to kill him.

Hunter’s ability to describe the setting with “the gold sparkles of sun on the broken
water around The Drongs” (“great pinnacles of rocks that rose straight out of the seabed”),
makes the reader feel he is somewhere on a rocky coast of northern Scotland. Her charac-
terization of the fisher folk in the village make the people immediately real, from the
warm-hearted Eric, to the village wise woman, Howdy, with “her sharp eyes and sly,
knowing smile.” The dialogue matches each character, though at first I objected to the
slurred “d’you” in the mermaid’s first question to Jon (when he unknowingly summoned
her by blowing her conch shell three times): “Well, what d’you want?” As her vain,
selfish, and capricious nature unfolded, I decided that the abrupt but rather informal speech
fit the self-centered mermaid very well. She was too caught up in herself to have gained
any wisdom in all the hundreds of years of her existence. She just became more and more
centered on herself.

Jon’s sister Anna is the real heroine of the story as she stubbornly refuses to give in to
the mermaid. Her love for her grandfather, Eric, finally helps her and Jon solve the
mermaid’s problem and enable their grandfather to return to his family. One final note of
cautions to the reader — you’ll probably fall in love with the blue-green and silver sparkle
of the northern sea and the beauty of the mermaid who lives there. Mermaids seem to
symbolize the spirit of the beautiful but capricious oceans that are so attractive, but
sometimes dangerous, to the humans who embark on a life at sea. — Lillian Heil

Readers who enjoyed Brian Jacques’ Redwall will be pleased to know that he has
completed the prequel to it entitled Mossflower. The warrior mouse, Martin, fearlessly
leads the woodlanders in the battle against the clever but power-mad wildcat, Tsarmina,
who wants to rule the Mossflower Woods.

Jacques characters are lively and entertaining. Readers will enjoy the irrepressible
mouse thief, Gonff, who makes up songs for every occasion; the fun loving otters; Amber
the squirrel queen and her troop of expert archer squirrels; the hedgehogs; the blind eagle
Argular; and many others. Each animal has a name and speech which fit both the animal
and the humanized aspects of his character. The writer must love gourmet food. The
“roast chestnuts in cream and honey, clover oatcakes, celery and herb cheese on acorn
bread with chopped radishes, or seed and barley cake with mint icing,” make the mouth
water for all kinds of unusual taste combinations.

Three concurrent story lines may cause some readers difficulty. The actions of the
enemy are described for a couple of pages; then the author tells about Martin and his trek
to find help from a boar; finally the efforts of the determined woodlanders are recounted so
that in each chapter the reader finds out what is happening to the three groups of animals.
Maossflower is an action packed adventure story that keeps the reader on edge right to the very last chapter. The only small concern I had was that Tsarmina's troops seemed to be such bumbling, stupid creatures in comparison to the woodlanders. However, because of their evil, clever leader they were enough of a menace to freedom-loving creatures to make this lengthy (431 pages) story an exciting one. — Lillian Heil


When Senator McCorkle showed up at the Overland Stage Company at 8:00 on Tuesday, he was told that the stagecoach he was counting on could not get through. Without that stage, he could not get to the train. And if he missed the train, he would not be in Washington for a very important meeting with the President. So begins a tale of action and suspense which tells of the senator's efforts to make that train — and the fearless driver Charlie Drummond who is his only hope for meeting with the President.

The appeal of Kimmel's tale is the hair-raising ride troubled with avalanches, Indians, floods, outlaws — and a train which left half an hour before they arrived. A surprise ending, based upon a true historical character, rounds out this exciting tale. — James S. Jacobs


I Want to be a Fire Fighter is about a young girl named Holly who wants to be a fire fighter, like her dad. This book gives basic fire safety instructions, as well as easy to understand explanations of what a fire fighter does. The color photos correlate well with the text. The conversational tone of the text is quite personable. For example, Holly tells us, "We decide ahead of time where to meet outside the house. Our family meeting place is under a tree."

The major drawback of the book is its lack of imagination. The text and the pictures fail to really excite a young child. However, this book would be quite helpful to parents in teaching children what firemen do and basic fire safety. — Emily Allred


Although this is a sequel to The People of Pineapple Place, Lindbergh has given us a story that more than stands by itself. She gives us all the background of the eight families who are changed, back in the 1930's, so that everyone remains the same age. Thanks to Mr. Sweeney, who is always inventing something, the Pineapple Place neighborhood has been transported all over the globe for the last 50 years. They are all invisible to the
outside world, except for Mrs. Pettylittle who is their provider (through her scavenging at the local garbage dumps.)

This sequel deals with Jeremiah Jenkins who feels like a prisoner in Pineapple Place. Jeremiah is tired of being in the 4th grade (after 50 years of studying the same subject, wouldn’t you be?) and never growing up. When they arrive in Athens, Connecticut (not the promised Athens, Greece), Jeremiah decides to go into town to see what he can see. Instead, he is seen — by Rudy, a little girl in the 5th grade — reflected in a mirror. They become friends and Jeremiah realizes that there is more to life than just traveling to new locations, never changing and growing. Change finally does come and surprise events occur that make it possible for Jeremiah to be happy.

Lindbergh has written a fun, believable adventure with interesting characters. The daughter of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, she brings excitement to the world of children’s books: Fantasy mingled with reality to be enjoyed by all young readers. — Helen Hoopes


The *Changeling Sea* by McKillip spins the tale of practical Periwinkle’s (Peri for short) amateur efforts at magic as she angrily puts a hex on the sea for drowning her fisherman father, leaving her mother completely preoccupied with her sorrow. For an amateur, Peri does very well. She stirs up a sea monster on a gold chain, meets the king’s moody son, and manages to stay one step ahead of Lyo the magician who has come to help the village capture the gold chain.

McKillip’s approach to magic is whimsical rather than mysterious. She contrasts the practical Peri to the knowledgeable young magician, Lyo, who falls in love with Peri. She doesn’t know that her wishes are magic, and he knows that magic is unpredictable. She unknowingly creates much of the magic in the book, and he is trying to figure out who did it. She thinks he is the one who can do magic, and he gradually suspects and finally realizes that she is the one responsible. She tells Lyo that he “has to do something” (to untangle the situation). His reply is usually quite practical like, “I am.” “I’m going to finish your supper.”

The story is filled with adventure as the two young protagonists try to match wits with the undersea kingdom. It is filled with intrigue as the two loves of the king are revealed to show his role in starting the whole tangle. Finally, the story shows that love is the most powerful magic of all as the undersea queen forgives the king, the king’s two sons go to their respective seas and land kingdoms, Periwinkle’s mother returns to the real world, and Peri realizes that the love of a magician is more real than her love for the sea son who has finally returned to his sea mother. — Lillian Heil
53 pages.
From “Cacophony” (the song of the garbage truck) with its final

“garrup garruck,
pfoo skree
bluck,”

to “The Egotistical Orchestra” with the piano who says

“I’m both upright and grand,”

Eve Merriam’s *Chortles* is a collection of new and selected word play poems. Those who have never read Merriam are invited to enjoy the poet who has fun with words. Those who know her poetry will welcome this collection of imaginative tricks and games with words. You’ll also increase your vocabulary, as I did when I found this poem, and looked up the word rodomontade (vainglorious boasting or bragging).

“Rodomontade in the Menagerie”
I’m the goose
that lays golden eggs.
I’m the cow
that jumps over the moon.
I’m the worm
that swallowed the robin.
I’m the wolf
that cries “Boy!”
I’m the cat
with ten lives.
I’m the
living dinosaur.

So chuckle with Eve Merriam’s *Chortles* from her first selection of “Joker” who starts with a “flicker of a snicker” and ends with a “hoo-hoo-hoo Ha HA,” to the final verse of her marvelous recipe for “Portmanteaux”
“So coin new words
and spend and lend
as syllables wander, waft and wend
and blend and bend and never end.”

— Lillian Heil


A story based partly on the written account of Mrs. Naylor’s mother’s life. She grew up in the early 1900’s in the Sioux County, Iowa.

Maudie was the middle of seven children. (Mrs. Naylor is a middle child like her mother and knows what it is like.) The middle child is too old to do what the younger children do. She must not be a baby, but at the same time, she is too little to do what the older children do.

Maudie thought if she were good enough, she could gain recognition and perhaps Aunt Sylvie would ask to be her godmother. But there were too many ways to get into trouble and Maudie seemed to find trouble. In spite of this, she found a way to be special to her family. — Catherine Bowles


When a spaceship lands in a boy’s backyard, the green men inside (who look a lot like balding, bespectacled, middle-aged earthlings) invite him to go for a ride. The boy refuses to accept without his mother’s permission. He finds her in the house at a loom, tells her of the invitation, and she says going for a ride in space is fine as long as he is home in time for supper. He does, and is.

Pinkwater is simply a master of the absurd. With his crude drawings and strings of simple sentences, this book should not be as funny as it is. Yet somehow, he pulls it all off. The craziness has such appeal even my teenage sons were caught up in the story.

Quotes from the book were sprinkled in their conversation for days afterwards.

I suppose the contrasts account for some of the humor. The green men are obviously skilled professionals in interplanetary travel. They move effortlessly and accurately throughout the Universe. But they call themselves “The Space Guys” — not exactly a title with clout. When they land on a planet, their guest from earth asks its name — the most basic of information. “Who knows? Some planet,” the guys from space said.” They can’t be bothered with that kind of trivia.
Space travel demands the most thorough planning. When boy asks how they protect themselves if a new planet has no air, or is crawling with wild animals or bad people, they have a ready answer: “We run back into the spaceship and close the door.” The boy says that sounds simple. Their reply: “We are space guys. We know what we are doing.”

Like the Space Guys, Pinkwater knows what he is doing. — James S. Jacobs


Showing the marvel of the animal kingdom, Kenneth Lilly’s illustrations will mesmerize all audiences. Animals from forests hot and cool, from the seas and rivers, from grasslands, deserts, and mountains peer at the reader. A one-humped Arabian camel brays humorously from one page, while a bactrian camel with two humps smiles complacently on the opposite page. In another illustration, a mother deer tenderly nuzzles her young fawn. Animal families are depicted convincingly and humanely in a manner that will have young children and their parents “ooh-ing” over each page.

More than sixty magnificent paintings of animals and their offspring display the infinite variety and beauty of the world of animals. Joyce Pope’s succinct and easily read descriptions of each animal reveal an intimate knowledge of the creatures who share our world. From Pope, children can learn that raccoons are good swimmers and that tigers like lounging in the water, that roe deer and elk usually bear twins, and that some members of the primate family bear offspring the size of a coffee bean. The interesting facts, combined with Lilly’s intricate and colorful illustrations, make this book hard to resist.

— Valerie Holladay


Jessie is a ten-year-old who has spent her entire life on a small island called “The Sands.” The only person that she has ever seen or talked to is her father, Danny. Jessie loves to swim and can swim in waters that are too cold for any other human being to swim in, and, she never gets cold. Danny is determined to keep her away from those on the mainland who are always trying to visit the island. After her tenth birthday, Jessie does swim to the town and spends the day exploring. All the people reject her and treat her with no respect at all. Hurt, she begins to find her way back to the ocean so that she can swim home. This is when she meets Lisa, a girl her own age who has learned all she can about Jessie and Danny from Max, an old man who used to know Danny. Max told Lisa that Mara, Jessie’s mother, was believed to be a mermaid (but Max had seen her legs).

The implications throughout the book are that Jessie is a mermaid, but the book ends in
mystery and leaves the reader to form his own conclusions. Perhaps the subtly is a little too vague for the younger reader. The relationship between Jessie and Danny is beautifully portrayed, but in my opinion, he gives her up too easily. (What other choice does he have, though?) If younger readers do select this book, they will enjoy it, but be prepared for some discussion as they try to decide how it really ends. — Helen Hoopes


On the 100th Anniversary of the writing of the ballad, "Casey at the Bat," Patricia Polacco has added additional text and placed it in the context of Little League. The modern illustrations, filled with detail and action, will appeal to young children.

To the older reader who is already acquainted with the poem, it may not prove as satisfactory. The introduction and ending with statements such as "Yer late, kid," and "C'mon, kids. Let's go home and see what's for dinner," do not seem to fit. They detract from the poem. Some of the wording in the poem itself differs from the version used today and is more choppy. Two lines from the poem are:

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair.
The rest clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast.

The more common version goes like this:

A straggling few got up to go,
    leaving with the rest,
With a hope which springs eternal
    within the human breast.

— Catherine Bowles


The theme is familiar. A young child, tempted by continual discoveries in nature, wanders too far and suddenly realizes she is lost. It is the soft, full-paged, colored pencil art work that sets the tone and makes this book a winner. Backgrounds are indistinct forms in brown and green hues while light seems to shine on the child and each new discovery.
Wonder, thoughtfulness, and then puzzlement pours from the child’s face. The fact that Emma is lost is felt in the two-page spread of woods with mighty trees and only one very small child standing alone at the base of one of them. And then comes the voice of her Grandpa to guide her back to him. Together they return home.

A reassuring book which all young children, trying to gather the courage to venture away from parents and home, will love. — Janet Low


Townsend’s first edition, 1965, was an important book; but now in its 3rd major revision, which brings the book up to 1985, this edition has become a monumental piece of scholarship. Approximately half the book is devoted to children’s literature up to 1945. This part can be enhanced by also reading Q. D. Leavis’s *Fiction and the Reading Public*, which places Townsend in a broader context. The second half of the book, 1945-1985, traces the rising dominance of children’s literature when most predicted that other forms of media would replace it (see p. 325).

Ninety-nine percent of the time I agree with, and enjoy Townsend. But that one percent! For instance, he says that *Chronicles of Narnia* is, “condescending, dated, and at times shoddy,” and that “the Christian allegory can occasionally cause queasiness,” which may say more about Townsend than [C.S.] Lewis.

He regards Frank L. Baum as, “shockingly underrated.” “...the unabashed American-ness of the *Oz* books makes them all the more original and attractive.” But if Townsend is going to tarnish Howard Pyle by pointing out that his mediaeval collages are less than skillfully pasted up, then he will have to accept that while we are naive enough to be fooled by a pseudo-mediaeval, we certainly can detect a pastiche of “unabashed American-ness.”

I am grateful to Townsend for defending *Johnny Tremain*. I have long suspected that Collier’s attack on Forbes may have been a self-serving bit of advertising for *My Brother Sam is Dead*. The Revolutionary War fought as World War II is, it seems, no further afield than the Revolutionary War fought as Vietnam. Will we soon have the Revolutionary War fought as Contras and Sandanistas?

Anyone who regularly buys children’s books should own a copy of Townsend. The strengths of this work is that Townsend consistently, and carefully argues for lasting literary quality. — Thom K. Hinckley

The author based this story on a personal experience he had when he was a boy of eleven. He fell in love with a white horse whom he named Beauty.

Luke was unhappy because his father had left home two years ago. Times were hard and when his mother lost her job in the city, they went to live with his grandfather on the farm. The adjustment was difficult, but when a white horse named Beauty comes into his life things begin to improve.

The author makes Luke’s problems seem real. We think, feel, and react like Luke. We know how he feels when he pulls the trigger to shoot Beauty. — Catherine Bowles


All children catch bad words, and so it was with Elbert. A bad word, spoken by a small boy at a fashionable garden party, results in Elbert getting his mouth washed out with soap; but the bad word, in the shape of a long, furry-tailed monster stays with Elbert until a wizard gardener cooks up some really delicious super-long words that everyone at the party applauds.

The book offers a way to tackle a bad language problem without being didactic. A good read-aloud lap book. — Leona Giles


Small Princess, Djeow Seow, youngest and very smallest daughter of the Emperor, is pretty much ignored by her four older brothers, who help their father rule the kingdom, and by her three older sisters, who were “like three midnight moons” in the eyes of their father. But Princess Djeow Seow was very tiny in his sight; she was left to eat by herself, talk to herself, and play by herself. Every morning and every evening she flew her kite — it was like a prayer in the wind.

When the Emperor was captured by wicked enemies and imprisoned in a high tower, Djeow Seow crept out onto the plain and built a hut of branches; every dawn and again at dark, she crossed the plain to the tower and tied a tiny basket of food to her kite; it pulled the basket high, high into the air... close to the window in the tower. In this way she
hoped to keep her father alive. Then came a day when a monk told her something important how she might save her father’s freedom. — Carol V. Oaks


Jane Yolen’s contribution to the growing group of reworked fairy tales is a lovely version of Sleeping Beauty. Illustrated with medieval pomp and riches by Ruth Sanderson, each page offers new delights to even the most romantic reader. Here are no tattered sex goddesses, but formal royalty and a face so fair that the Prince’s year-long dream of Briar Rose seems only her due.

Yolen has not taken major liberties with Perrault’s tale, only furnished small, smoothing details like the bed upon which Briar Rose falls asleep in the bare tower room, and the burnished color of her glorious hair. Yolen’s prose is more than equal to the task (she writes a very acceptable original fairy tale) but this reviewer wonders if anyone will ever read the beginning sources again . . . and how *they* would appear, garnished with glowing pictorial enhancements such as these . . . . However, this is a thoroughly satisfactory production and will override the video versions for almost every little girl. Note for budding artists: a note from the illustrator explaining the processes used and the road taken will be ignored by most readers, but the next generation Ruth Sanderson’s may find it illuminating. —


A welcome republication of a charming story which has been out-of-print; one which has had appeal for youngsters too shy to make friends in a new neighborhood. Thomas spent his time watching the other children, and grown-up passers-by, from the safety of his front porch. A Halloween costume hid him from the strangers of whom he was afraid — sure that they would like him. Then, he found that he could have a lot of good friends. Recommended as a delightful picture book, and as an October special among holiday stories. — Carol V. Oaks