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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

**Authors**
Helen Hoopes, Thomas Kent Hinckley, Gabi Kupitz, Lillian Heil, Kathe C. Homer, John B. Wright, Robbin Olsen Major, Jan Staheli, and Janet Francis
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Book Reviews

Baynton, Martin. *Why Do You Love Me?*

This is a brilliant little book about the simple relationship between a little boy and his father. It is a bright, crisp day, and the father and son go for a walk. While the two explore the great outdoors, the little boy keeps questioning his father as to why the father loves him. The questions are so simple and the answers are so profound and reassuring. It is a comforting book to every child who would like to have their own father answer this question the way this father does. The illustrations are superb with warm details. Baynton is especially good at illustrating the various moods of the father and son: fear, joy, astonishment, caring, concern, and especially, love. A book about love that will touch all readers whether old or young.

—Helen Hoopes

Bennett, Jay. *The Dark Corridor.*

Jay Bennett creates a terse, suspenseful story with little evident effort. In this case (as usual), his protagonist is a young man deprived, through unseen violence, of someone close to him.

Kerry Lanson had an ambivalent relationship with beautiful, rich, unpredictable Alicia Kent; but when she committed suicide, as had three other girls they had known, he realized that he had actually loved her. The memory of that love would not let his bewildered questions about her death fade.

Alicia had once said, "Life is a dark corridor that leads to a dusty death." Now, Kerry felt himself following her down that dark corridor. Her father accused him of murder, her friend said he must forget, but no one answered the questions.

The young people Bennett writes about live in an enticing (albeit flat) world, but it doesn't resemble any reality of character or place, and occasionally, the stream-of-consciousness sentences seem contrived. However, mysteries are not written for literary purposes, and if they hold, entertain, and resolve logically, who can complain. *The Dark Corridor* probably doesn't require more than one trip, but that's OK—there are lots of people who want to go.

—Janet Francis

A

A king feels a debt to a wise man and wishes to reward him even though the wise man wants nothing. The king insists, so the wise man agrees to accept grains of rice, curiously counted out. It takes an unusual amount of rice to convince the king that his pride has made him foolish, even though he is a king.

This book has beautiful full-color illustrations with a real flavor of India. The story is well told, and the moral is not heavy-handed. It would be a good read-aloud book because the story moves along smoothly and its action and emotion are well supported by the pictures.

—Jan Staheli

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A-

Pre-4

Much like Dupasquier’s *The Great Escape*, reviewed two years ago in the *Children’s Book Review*, this book is based on comic-book-type illustrations with much detail. The book consists of three parts: "Yesterday, 77 B.C.;" "Today;" and "Tomorrow, 2250 A.D." In "Yesterday," Dupasquier tells (using pictures, only) the story of a young girl who goes for a walk with her older brother and father. She is a little mischief-maker—climbing on the statues, splashing water on her brother, etc. Her father finally lifts her up onto the railing of a bridge. As her sandal slips off and floats away into the distance, the pictures get smaller and smaller.

"Today" begins with pictures, too, but then come the words of Tony Bradman as he tells the story of another little girl who keeps losing her sandals. This little girl is much like the little girl in "Yesterday." In the end of this section, her father lifts her up onto the railing of a bridge and her sandal slips off and floats off into the distance. You’ll never guess what happens in "Tomorrow." You’re right! Another lost sandal! But what a clever book to tie together the different civilizations of the world, and what fun to try to take in all the details of Dupasquier’s worlds. Children will sit for hours making up stories for the different time periods, and observing all the details of *The Sandal*.

—Helen Hoopes

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Branley, Franklyn M. *Shooting Stars*. Illustrated by Holly Keller.  

With simple but pleasant drawings, and a text that tells clearly and engagingly about shooting stars, meteors, and craters, this book quickly captures the eye and the imagination of the young reader. It gives tips on how to see shooting stars. It tells about what shooting stars really are, where they are from, how big they are, and some interesting history about meteors. But more than that, the pictures bring close to the reader the fascination of watching those pinpoints of light sparkling in a blackened sky. I would recommend this book to any child who wants to know more, to see, and to understand.

—Jan Staheli


Wisely wonderful, remarkable and rare, this small volume of tales will be a welcome addition to anyone’s library. William Brooke is a storyteller’s storyteller, dispensing flair and insight while spinning splendid tales. A bemused Prince awakens a thoroughly real Sleeping Beauty who, as she certainly doesn’t remember being asleep for one hundred years, immediately asks for his identification. Paul Bunyan meets Johnny Appleseed, an interesting encounter since Johnny likes trees "vertical and Paul likes 'em horizontal." Cinderella has a chance to try on her glass slipper, even though she drops her "h's" and generally uses the worst grammar the prince has ever heard. John Henry pits his considerable strength and skill against a machine and wins much more than a race. And as Jack finds his perilous way down the beanstalk, Mr. Brooke teaches us the art of storytelling.

This is an enchanting book, both sweet and wry, where the characters are real and their stories touch the heart as well as the mind. I’m going out this afternoon to buy a copy for myself!

—Jan Staheli
Clark, Margaret Goff. *The Vanishing Manatee.*

They kiss underwater, and Christopher Columbus mistook them for very homely mermaids. In real life, however, they are the warm-water-loving, community-minded mammals called manatees, or "sea cows," and prolific author Margaret Goff Clark has written a book (illustrated with photographs) about them. She discusses the history and study of the manatee and points out several man-made hazards that are threatening these congenial sea creatures.

Clark's narrative is written in first person with lots of factual information woven into the telling. It is not precisely thrilling reading, but many will finish this book thoroughly charmed by these endearing mammals. Clark's bountiful facts include an index and sources to go to for more information.

—Robbin Olsen Major

Clouse, Nancy L. *Mapas rompecabezas de los Estados Unidos.*

Have you ever wished for a way to make Geography fun for children? Nancy Clouse's book *Mapas rompecabezas de los Estados Unidos* [Map Puzzles of the United States] encourages its readers to imagine a map of the United States as a jig-saw puzzle and each state as a piece of the puzzle. Each state has a unique form which, with a little imagination, can become another object. For example, Oklahoma turned right-side-up is a frying pan, while upside-down it becomes a baseball cap. By joining these shapes, new images can be created. For example, by joining Alabama, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island, a picture of a turtle is formed. After explaining a few basics, Clouse illustrates the rest of her book with brightly-colored pictures made up of various states.

This book combines many wonderful forms of children's games and puzzles (riddles, hidden pictures, make believe, etc.) with a field of study which is often viewed as dull and boring. The result is a fun learning tool which can help any teacher or parent teach geography to children. This book is a translation which indicates it is also available in English, and perhaps other languages. This is an added bonus for those with children in a language immersion program or bilingual school. This book promotes new vocabulary words while reinforcing U.S. geography.

—John B. Wright

This is a clever retelling of the well-known tale of the mother goose who leaves her goslings in another's care while she goes to market. The "other," in this case, is a "do-nothing" mouse who lives up to his reputation by doing nothing to protect the goslings when the fox comes to steal them away. One of the goslings hides from the fox and is able to tell his mother what happened when she arrives at home. The two of them trick the fox and save the others.

I enjoyed the author's choice of words in this retelling—very sparse, but carefully chosen. Even more enjoyable is the artwork. The pictures are very busy and interesting, and the illustrator moves from warm yellows, browns, and brick shades to cool purples and blues reflecting the changes of mood in the story.

—Kathe C. Homer


Zoe and Zoe Louise are best friends. They share the same name, play with Zoe's dolls, and live in the same house—one hundred years apart. Zoe lives in the present, and Zoe Louise appears down the back stone stairs from the past. As Zoe grows older, she begins to notice that time is going much more slowly for her friend, who changes very little. The old stone marker in the graveyard tells of Zoe Louise's childhood death, and Zoe begins to wonder how her friend died and what she can do about it. Surely there is a reason these girls have been brought together in such a way.

This is an interesting book. The device of time travel and changing the past has been used often, but the twist here is that the girls are great friends before the modern child ever tumbles to the fact that Zoe Louise is a ghost. There is also a nicely done secondary plot revolving around Zoe and her mother, a dropout flower child who feels more comfortable with the family dog than with her own daughter. I found this to be a quick, enjoyable read, and think girls in grade 5 through 7 or 8 would enjoy it—especially those girls who are fascinated by the large numbers of books published lately about ghosts and supernatural happenings.

—Jan Staheli


Demi retells and illustrates the Chinese tale of Ping, a boy who loved to grow flowers. When the emperor decides to choose his successor by distributing seeds to all the children and judging their results after a year’s time, Ping is overjoyed because he has always been able to grow beautiful flowers. At the end of the year, Ping is the only one who brings an empty pot and is rewarded for his honesty. The emperor had cooked all of the seeds and none of them could grow.

This simple tale of the rewards of honesty have been enhanced by Demi’s line and watercolor drawings. The delicate illustrations have the fine detail of flowers, trees, Chinese robes, and architecture, and the feelings of space and balance that is always a part of oriental art. *The Empty Pot* is a beautiful addition to folktales written for children.

—Lillian Heil


Jennifer Dewey’s book about animal camouflage is both beautiful and informative. You may have discovered how hard it is to find a green tomato worm on a vine, but have you seen African grasshoppers that look like stalks of grass, eels that are brilliantly colored to match their coral reef home, or a tropical flower mantis that looks like the orchid it sits on? Her illustrations give us visual proof that animals’ colors provide for them a means to help them disappear or seem to be something else. Dewey’s text describes the varieties of camouflage techniques and the behaviors which allow animals to take advantage of their protective coloring. Her book includes information about animals whose colors change because of temperature, touch, dampness, or light, and those whose protective color changes in summer and winter.

After a general introduction, the book is organized into spiders and insects, reptiles and amphibians, and birds and mammals, with a final note about people’s deliberate use of camouflage in the use of masks, costumes, and face paint to act out solemn rituals and ceremonies. This is a concise and beautifully illustrated book that provides many examples of the protection that camouflage provides to the animal world.

—Lillian Heil
Doherty, Katherine M. and Craig A. *Benazir Bhutto.*

Benazir Bhutto may not be a household topic, but she may again become a power to be reckoned with. At age 37, Benazir has come full-circle: from privileged childhood in Pakistan; education at Radcliffe in Boston and at Oxford in England; imprisonment in Pakistan by her arch-enemy, General Zia; her tenacious rise as the first Muslim woman to be elected Prime Minister of a Muslim country; and currently, her questionable status as a deposed leader charged with corruption. As this book was written, Ms. Bhutto had just survived a no-confidence vote. [Her government was dismissed only a few months ago, because as its leader, she has been charged with incidents due to corruption. Only time will tell whether the charges against her will stand.]

The Dohertys have exposed Benazir as a willful, modern woman who refuses to be squashed. Any student who follows the news will recognize Benazir Bhutto. Any female will be touched by her sheer will to make a difference and by the many "firsts" she has achieved.

Benazir is the **first** woman to be **elected** to hold public office in a modern Muslim state, the youngest to head a state in the modern world, and the **first** elected leader to give birth while in office. Among modern, educated women, she may be the first to have submitted to an "arranged marriage" (which is the custom among women in her country), but which also brought howls of dismay from modern, educated young women.

Whatever her choices, Benazir must be admired for her indomitable will, long-suffering, intelligence, and her commitment to her religious way of life, her family, and Pakistan's future.

This biography is easy to read without sounding elementary. It is punctuated throughout with photographs and interest is built and held by delving into the history of Pakistan, past and current, including U.S. support of General Zia and the hows and whys of unfulfilled campaign promises. A thoroughly informative work about a modern political figure: smart, attractive and female. I need to know: what is happening to her NOW?!

—Gabi Kupitz

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Ehlert's colorful cutouts make *Feathers for Lunch* another visual treat. The plot is simple. The cat is out and he's looking for lunch—like a bird of some sort. Fortunately for the birds, the cat wears a bell and twelve different birds fly out of reach leaving the cat with only feathers for lunch.

The text has a pleasant rhythm and rhymes that move it along as each bird flies out of reach and Kitty is taken inside for his usual meat from a can. Besides labeling the names of each bird and its call, the author labels the plants such as lilacs, Rembrandt tulip, bleeding hearts, and forsythia. The plants are stylized, but very recognizable. At the end of the book, each of the twelve birds is shown with summary information on size, food, home, and area. A combination of facts and visual delight make this an outstanding picture book.

—Lillian Heil

Evitts, William J. *Early Immigration in the United States*. 

This is a compact little review of *Early Immigration in the United States* from the time of the "New World" to the present. General statistics are given concerning the number of immigrants who came to this country, when they came, and from which countries. The book is full of colored drawings, with a few pictures of these people, illustrating the hardships that they had to endure. Also of interest are the tales of the mistreatment that many of these people had to endure at the hands of those who had come before—sometimes only one generation earlier. The Chinese, the Jews, the Polish, the Hungarians, the Russians, and the Ukrainians had an especially hard time. It also tells of the joy that these immigrants felt as they came to this great land. *Immigration in the United States* is an easy-to-read, provocative introduction to this aspect of American History, but it tries to cover too many facts in such a little book.

—Helen Hoopes

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After reading *Harold the Herald*, my estimation for the intelligence of people growing up during the time of Knights has just gone up (especially for the heralds). Fradon has written and illustrated a book about the life of a herald. Her humorous asides, written in bubbles, keep the text from getting too heavy, and her practice of footnoting new words helps the reader to quickly see the meaning of unfamiliar terms then move on with the text. Her insertion of phrases used during the age of chivalry, e.g., "Harken ye this," "But hold," and "by Neptune's beard," give the reader a feeling of being there, or at least of listening to someone talk who has been there. Fradon's fictionalized story of Harold the herald gives the reader a comprehensive look at the life of a herald.

I was impressed by the stories behind the coat of arms worn by each knight and the connection Fradon made with actual history, i.e., the kind of man Richard the First was as indicated by the three lions on his shield. The mind-boggling part of a herald's job were the facts that he had to learn about all these designs used by the Knights in order to carry out his job. He had to learn a whole new language called "Blazon." Part of the reason he had to know these designs was that he was sent out by his prince to search for culprits using coats of arms which they had simply faked but which didn't have the approval of the crown. An interesting part of his job was to watch a battle from a safe spot and see if the knights serving under his prince were performing valiant deeds and honoring the rules of battle and knighthood. The prince would then reward a brave knight more than one who was not so brave. Heralds were the ones who decided the winner of a battle. At one famous battle (of Agincourt in 1415), it was obvious by the number of the dead (7,000 to 10,000 French but only 100 English) that the English had won, but a French herald had to declare it to the English King before it was official.

Heralds had many other jobs such as publicizing their knight, arranging the tournaments, telling the court what was happening at the joust (like a sports announcer), carrying love letters back and forth, and sometimes, arranging funerals. This book is interesting, sometimes humorous, and very informative. A herald had to be an intelligent hard-working man because his was an important job during the age in which he lived.

—Lillian Heil

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The children have helped their father to gather greens and take them down the hill from Hawthorn Farm to the church, and have helped decorate for the Christmas Eve service. When they return, Mum is standing at the gate shouting. All the animals have disappeared. They call the police. Nothing. Finally, Mum insists that they go to the service. On their return, they discover the animals celebrating Christmas in an unusual setting and in an extraordinary way.

The artwork has a lovely human quality. This is my favorite Christmas book of the year. It was first published in England in 1988. The author is an art historian and the artist was trained at the Royal College of Art. I do not know exactly what gives this book its special quality, but I do know that every time I read this to my children, it delights them and warms the cockles of my heart.

—Thomas K. Hinckley


I was amused by my nephew’s tales of what I thought were unusual idiosyncrasies of a few baseball and football players and their coaches. Then I read *They Don’t Wash Their Socks*, a book about sports superstitions by Kathlyn Gay, and decided that peculiar routines, insistence on a certain glove, hat, socks or underwear were the norm among the top amateurs and professionals in the world of sports. Gay has systematically listed the rituals and good-luck procedures, otherwise known as superstitions, that well-known athletes (in every sport I could think of) make part of their preparation before a game. Some of the superstitions are well-known such as wearing the same clothes you were wearing when you won a game, or carrying some sort of good-luck charm, but the more elaborate rituals like arriving at a certain time, dressing in a certain place in a set order, and then going to the bleachers and sitting in a certain place, were new to me. Another surprise was the amount of lore and superstition surrounding each sport—some religiously observed by many players (like where you cross the baselines of baseball) and some flaunted for good luck (like wearing number 13).

Those who love sports would probably enjoy reading more about the winning habits of well-known athletes; but those who don’t keep up on the trivia about superstars will find the diversity of rituals quite entertaining.
About two-thirds of the way through, I decided that what the book labels superstitions are actually a kind of ritual to help the athlete focus all of his thinking on the upcoming game. The will-to-win is a powerful force in determining the winner of a game. Gay’s final chapter discusses some of these ideas as she analyzes why sports magic survives. If wearing a favorite headband can be a constant factor in the unpredictable world of sports, why not wear it? It’s reassuring. The author defines the rituals and routines as a way to create the mental and physical harmony to win. She also throws in a note of warning—if the superstition is used for more than developing confidence and improving skill, the player could be in trouble if he can’t follow his elaborate ritual or he loses his good-luck charm.

There is an extensive bibliography on superstitions in sports for those interested in reading more on the subject, and a short index to pages about particular players and teams, and the various superstitions.

—Lillian Heil

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*Rosie and the Rustlers* is a delightful little story written in romping poetry that is sure to intrigue all children. The story is a simple one: While Rosie and her ranch hands are visiting their friends, the Cherokee, "Greasy Ben and his ruffianly men" come to steal Rosie’s herd of steers. Rosie, her cowboys, and Hawkeye John, the Indian chief, set out to bring Greasy Ben to justice. When they finally find the hideout, it’s Utah Jim ("He’s the one his friends considered none too bright") who comes up with the "neat idea for ensnaring Greasy Ben without a fight."

The fun of this book is three-fold: (1) the fun rhythm of the poetry, (2) the exaggerated, refined language used to describe the wild, cowboy adventure, and (3) the wonderful illustrations. To give you a taste for the poetry and the language, consider the following:

They pursued them night and day to the mountains far away
As they followed tracks that John alone could see,
Till at last they thought it best to pitch camp and have a rest
So they stopped and ate a buffalo for tea.
Now, for the illustrations. What a joy! Gerrard has created some wonderful little miniature people, and a background that just doesn’t stop. Children will want to spend lots of time on every page, and will find new details each time they look at the book. The characters all have 20 or 30 gallon cowboy hats (the bad guys dark and the good guys light), the rocks are extremely jagged, and the waterfalls seem to gurgle. Have you ever seen an Indian chief sitting on the side of a rugged mountain sipping tea out of a China cup? He’s in this book! I especially loved the fiddler (at the celebration at the end of the story) who seems to be staring right into the reader’s eyes.

Where the mountains meet the prairie, where the men are wild and hairy,
There’s a little ranch where Rosie reigns supreme.
Where the grass could not be greener, where the air could not be cleaner,
Life is happy, life is peaceful—it’s a dream.

And so is this book!

—Helen Hoopes

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A 2+ NF

This is a very simple-to-read account of the search for the Nuestra Señora de Atocha, a sunken treasure ship. It retells events surrounding the ship, from the sinking, through the finding, the salvaging, restoration and preservation, cataloging, and distribution of the treasures. The concise, simple language is enhanced by illustrations of watercolor washes and ink line drawings. The information unfolds in a very readable story form. The book concludes with simplified explanations of four other treasure hunts and a brief history of diving.

It is amazing to me to see how much pertinent information can be found in a book of this format. The author very carefully covers the basics of a treasure hunt in simple language, with relatively large print and fun illustrations. I think a young reader could get a good idea of the time and work involved, and the fun and satisfaction one might find as a treasure hunter.

—Kathe C. Homer

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*Barmi* is a fictional Pre-Roman settlement that, over two and a half millennia, grows to be a major twentieth-century city. The fourteen panoramas that show the sweep of change are spectacular. If the book consisted solely of these, I would give it a rave review, but unfortunately each panorama is accompanied by a page of details, most of which are flawed by technical errors. Stone weighs approximately 150 pounds per cubic foot, which makes many of the detail drawings rather ridiculous. The mid-fourteenth century church has a late-nineteenth-century roof truss, and the joints are mythical, etc.

Accuracy of detail seems to me to be of paramount importance in children's books. The final sentence, "Perhaps the same technology that helped generate the hardships [of the twentieth century] can be used to alleviate them" would lead one to believe that this is not a factual book for children, but a fairy tale for adults. As a geographer, I certainly do not believe that more technology is going to "restore the human quality to city life."

—Thomas K. Hinckley


William Hooks weaves a tale of magic from the Carolinas about a free-issue (born to a slave but freed at birth) girl named Belle who loves a slave named Joshua. Belle renounces her free-issue status in order to marry Joshua, but not long afterwards the master announces that Joshua is to be sold. Belle, desperate, runs to Granny Lizard, a "cunger woman." Granny Lizard gives her some magic that turns Joshua into a tree by day and returns him to man-form by night. Belle and Joshua live this half-life for a time until the Joshua tree is felled to make a new roof for the smokehouse. Belle almost loses her mind with the grief of it, but Granny Lizard’s conjure magic is not finished with the couple yet.

Hooks has worked his usual fine storytelling magic with this tale, and Pinkney’s illustrations swirl with wispy lines and cross-hatchings that, themselves, cast a cobwebbed conjure spell. The hardships of slavery are secondary to the theme of the survival of love, but some of those hardships are alluded to, making this an interesting addition to the discussion and study of the antebellum South.

—Robbin Olsen Major
18 Brigham Young University


*Balloon Science* by Etta Kaner has 50 balloon science activities which use ordinary household items and can help explain why your ears pop in a fast elevator, how moving air can hold up an airplane, how to make a balloon rocket, and how to make a working model of your lungs. In other words, balloons help you learn a lot about air and how it works for us and inside us.

The book is divided into six sections. The first section introduces the topic of air, the second shows how to make air work, and the third shows how air works above and under water. Chapter four deals with balloons and the uses of hot air while chapter five gets into electricity and balloons. Finally, chapter six has activities dealing with the gas we exhale—carbon dioxide. The postscript is a section inviting the reader to plan his own balloon experiments. There is a one-page index for easy location of experiments and terms related to uses of "air" power.

Go ahead, read the book and become a balloonatic! (a person who is crazy about balloons).

—Lillian Heil

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Ten-year-old Ariel fears that the warm, familiar life on the farm and the relationships within her family will change with the coming of a new baby. Her grandmother, with whom she is very close, has a plan to use her own skills and Ariel’s artistic ability to make a very special present for the new baby. However, grandmother suffers a severe stroke which further frightens Ariel as she must consider grandmother’s aging and even the possibility of her dying.

This is a very tender, well-written story about a warm, empathetic relationship between a grandmother and her granddaughter. The book is short, only 60 pages, but very moving, as the two main characters are well-drawn and very real.

—Kathe C. Homer

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Levin, Betty. *Brother Moose.*

Nell and Louisa are "almost sisters" riding the Orphan Train through eastern Canada to their new homes. Even though Nell is the smaller of the two, she takes charge of the slower Louisa. When Louisa's new family becomes unbearably cruel, and Nell's family doesn't meet her at the train stop, both girls begin the long trek across eastern Canada and Maine to find a home for themselves. Joining them are old Joe, an Indian with a secretive past, and his grandson, Peter. Their adventures through the cold of winter, and their pursuit by the strong, wild, friendly moose make for excitement and suspense. A story of people's longing to belong, individual acceptance of those who need special help, and the importance of family, are all elements which will make young readers enjoy this tale of *Brother Moose.*

—Helen Hoopes

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Milton Meltzer's short personal note at the end of his book on American politics indicates his strong personal involvement with the process of democracy and change even before he was old enough to vote. His book clearly illuminates the practical workings of the government, the problems, and the possibilities. It tells how few people there are who vote now, but convincingly describes how often the candidates do not represent any major philosophical difference thus making a vote one way or another seem unimportant. He describes some of the lobbyists who appear to have no scruples, and others who work hard to present convincing evidence, but who then let the legislators decide for themselves. Scandals and corruptions are described, but so are the reform movements.

The book provides a clear description of how our democracy has operated. It demonstrates the practical operations of executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and the social climate that made it possible for liberal Brandeis to be approved by the senate in 1916 as a Justice for the Supreme Court but conservative Bork, in 1987, to be rejected.

Meltzer's background as a champion of the poorer classes helps him to provide some interesting insights such as that federal judges have a class bias because they are mostly from highly privileged backgrounds.
The book is thoughtful, informative, and realistic about the problems of making a democracy work. He is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. He simply says it can work and we have the idealistic young people who can make the difference.

—Lillian Heil

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This is the story of fourteen-year-old Daisy Flowerdew (named after a flower and the dew that rested upon it) who is different from other children. Brought up by her Granny Henry because her own mother didn’t want her, Daisy is devastated when Granny suddenly dies. When she is taken to live with Jessee, her mother, recently married to Delbert who wants Jessee all to himself, Daisy withdraws even further into herself. Terrified of Delbert and her mother, Daisy seeks solace in two paper dolls (Terence and Grace) that her mother purchases for her. Delbert, wanting to get rid of Daisy, offers $10.00 to any man who will marry her. Elmer Goots thinks he is that man. *The Legend of Daisy Flowerdew* is a story of magic and enchantment with a touch of the fairy tale.

It is also the story of a child who is emotionally abused by the adults in her world. It is the story of a child who is somewhat different, suffering in a world that expects her to conform. Well-written and absorbing though it be, it is sad that the only recourse for Daisy is the world of fairy tales and magic. I believe that any young person—especially girls—will enjoy reading this book, but the teacher, librarian, or parent needs to be able to talk to the reader about the emotional needs of children and soften the impact of Pendergraft’s Jessee, the mother who doesn’t know how to love.

—Helen Hoopes

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The splash of daffodils announces to the family walking through the woods, that someone lived here once. Artifacts evoke sights and sounds from the past. Pinkney’s water-colors enhance the remembering of the family now gone. Dragonwagon’s poetry, when read aloud, becomes a viable piece of family history.
Each reader's reaction to this book will likely be different, but that only makes it more inviting. You need to discover how you will resonate with this piece of the past.

—Thomas K. Hinckley

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If you ask most people what they know about Charles Lindbergh, they will probably tell you that he was the first man to fly across the Atlantic ocean (1927). They may say that he is best known because of the famous kidnapping of his son, Charles, Jr. (1932). Beyond that, most likely they will not know a great deal about him. This short biography will help the young reader fill in the blanks.

Did you know that Lindbergh visited Germany in 1936, and his admiration for the German government turned away the respect of many Americans? He campaigned, on both radio and in the newspapers, urging America to keep out of the war, finally joining the American First Committee, one of the largest isolationist groups in America. Many thought that because of this, he was a traitor to his country; especially disappointed was President Roosevelt. Many do not know that, despite these controversies, later in his life Lindbergh became a civilian advisor to the U. S. Air Force, and served on the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board where he acted as a consultant to the Space Program.

Randolph’s *Charles Lindbergh* is filled with black-and-white photographs of Lindbergh and his life, and is easy to read. There are many quotes from other biographies written about Lindbergh and a bibliography is included. This is a good introduction to a complicated and controversial man.

—Helen Hoopes

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*The Talking Tree* is really a princess who was turned into a tree when she bathed in a "fountain as clear as crystal." "It was an old witch’s trap!" A young King, who had a collection of all the rarest things in the world, heard about the talking tree and decided he must have it. After searching the world, he finally found the tree and learned it was the princess under a wicked spell. The King, who had fallen in love with the princess
and wanted to marry her, sought to find the secret that would free her. There are many spells to be broken before this can happen and this book leads us through them all in a way that is full of the richness of old fairy tales. The Rayevsky’s (a husband and wife team) have reworked this old Italian folktale into a captivating work for children. Robert’s illustrations were created in such detail that we can almost hear the wild dogs howl, the witch cackle, and the ogre snarl. Children will be enthralled with the pictures and the story.

—Helen Hoopes

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Shannon, George. *Unlived Affections.*

Willie Ramsey is alone now, and just as glad for it. He has lived all his life with his grandmother, Grom, a cold and bitter woman who has never shown him affection or warmth. Now she is dead, and Willie is selling her house and her belongings and getting ready to leave for college and a life of his own. There is only one room left to empty—his mother’s room—which has been kept locked and enshrined since her death when Willie was two. In looking through the room, Willie finds a large box of letters from his father hidden in the back of a drawer. As he reads the letters, Willie finds answers to many of the mysteries of his life—who his father is and why he left his wife and child, what caused Grom’s bitterness and why she refused to speak of his father. But the letters present a whole new set of questions that only Willie can answer. He must decide who he wants to be, what he will do with his new knowledge, and whether he can forgive the many people in his life who have not told each other the truth.

This is a painful book about a young man looking for his place in the world, and finally finding the information which will help him carve that niche. I would recommend it to mature readers of high school age of either sex.

—Jan Staheli

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It is hard to imagine being nostalgic about a place where you cannot see the stars at night; where the air is filled with small particles of graphite that bite into your skin as the wind whips them around; and, where there are days when you feel as if you are living
in a "whirling world of smoke" because of the temperature inversions that keep the smoke from the steel mills in the valley.

This story is told from the point of view of an adult reminiscing about her childhood in an area where steel production was the main industry—and, of course, the memories of childhood are sweet. In this age of environmental awareness, it is impossible to accept the valley of the steel mill the way this child sees it. However, the reader can empathize with the author's childhood longings and can understand that her grandchildren, coming back to visit, "love more than anything else to listen to stories about the days when all night long the sky glowed red."

This is a good book for environmental awareness. The text is very descriptive, and, no matter how fond the author is of her steel mill valley, the reader can feel the pain of a ravaged environment—from the air above to the once deep ravines that have since become hills of slag.

—Kathe C. Homer


Jean Stangl has put a lot of information between the covers of *Crystals and Crystal Gardens You Can Grow.* It is organized, readable, and enhanced by a variety of interesting, well-labeled photographs, and clear, mostly black-and-white drawings. A large part of the book is devoted to experiments using common household items. The instructions are easy to follow, and Stangl, responsibly, encourages adult supervision with each project requiring the use of a stove. Words in boldface are defined in the text, and a bibliography and index are included.

This is a very well-done book and would be a welcome addition to any collection used by children with a budding (or even a passing) interest in crystallography.

—Robbin Olsen Major

Stannard, Russell. *The Time and Space of Uncle Albert.*

Initially, Uncle Albert seems "cutesoid" and condescending, but before too many pages, it is clear that this is Einsteinian relativity written for the space age. The dust jacket blurb on Einstein's *Relativity* says, "With only a high school education, the reader
can understand Albert Einstein's explanation of his epoch-making theory." Russell Stanford, a graduate of the University of London, and vice president of the Institute of Physics in Great Britain, does even better. He makes relativity accessible to middle-school students.

Gedanken tells her Uncle Albert that she has to do a science project. Her teacher suggests something on energy in the home. But Uncle Albert gets her started on an incredible research project that takes her through time and space in an extraordinary rocketship. Her adventures make dropping a rock off a railway carriage seem tame. In a series of deep space probes, Gedanken learns why she cannot catch a beam of starlight no matter how fast her rocket goes, what happens to her watch in space, and that describing events in space is relative to the position of the observer.

It is marvelous to follow Gedanken's experiments in imagination, but I was aghast to learn that she only got a B. But then we find the teacher's annotation, "I've told you not to be disrespectful." She has included a test for the teacher! and written, "There are 18 questions. If you get fewer than five right, you are useless. If you get five to eight right, you are quite good but try harder. If you get nine to fourteen right, you are very good. If you get fifteen to eighteen right, you are a genius, or you cheat. Good luck." The italics are in the original and one suspects that Gedanken has seen them written on her papers.

This is one of the best informational books that I have read in a long time.

—Thomas K. Hinckley

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This is a fantasy about an artist who lives by the sea and loves to make sculptures of animals in the sand. One fine day, he works all day making a beautiful sand horse. When the horse is gone the next morning, the beachcombers talk about how sad it is that the sand horse was washed away. The artist, however, knows that the horse really came to life and was called to join the white horses riding the waves of the ocean far out to sea. The text is enhanced by illustrations of soft watercolor washes and simple detail which gives the feeling of warm sandy beaches against the wilder sea.

—Kathe C. Homer

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When little George asks his father what that "horrible, brown, crinkly thing" pinned to the wall is, his father hesitates a moment before pulling George onto his lap to tell him of the haggy old witch who tried to steal George and his brother from their beds the night before. In wonderfully colorful language, Dad describes his battle with the witch to save his beloved boys. "Mummy" gets in on the battle, and in the end, they vanquish the witch, who disappears with a "watery splop!" George is awestruck until he finds that he has been tricked, whereupon he laughs along with his parents... and the reader!

This is a really delightful picture book! The story begs for a very dramatic reading. The language is extremely colorful. Each word seems carefully chosen to enhance the feelings the author wants to convey. The large watercolor illustrations are expressive of the action and capture both the hideousness of the wicked witch and the gentleness of the family members.

Regardless of the gory aspects of the battle and the frightening feeling the battle with the witch conjures, the ending leaves you with a delightful feeling of warmth and humor.

—Kathe C. Homer

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Judith Viorst’s books have always been a delight to read—until *Earrings!* The young girl of the book wants to get her ears pierced so she can adorn herself with earrings. She cajoles, rationalizes, begs, bargains, and pesters, but her parents stand firm.

It pains me to say so, but Viorst’s text just isn’t executed with the lilt of her previous books. The heroine of Malone’s humorous pictures is much more engaging than the heroine of Viorst’s words. Still, earring-hungry little girls might like this book read to them once, and could then wear out its pages enjoying the amusing illustrations.

—Robbin Olsen Major

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Chocolate Chip Cookies is a fun little book that preschoolers and their mothers will love to read, almost as much as they love making cookies. Palmer’s text consists of only one word per page, but you know exactly what she is describing. The recipe is included at the end—with her one-word text in bold—for those who would like to try both. Preiss has illustrated the book using blond-haired, blue-eyed twin boys (her own, perhaps?) as the cookie makers. These boys seem to come alive, with a look of real intent in making cookies. They are such solemn little tykes while stirring in the ingredients, and you can almost see them drooling as the warm cookies come out of the oven. Done in warm browns with splashes of blue, your little ones will almost smell the chocolate chip cookies and want to make some of their own. What a treat!

—Helen Hoopes

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Wells, Rosemary. *The Little Lame Prince*. Based on a story by Dinah Maria Mulock Craik.

In a real departure from her usual choice of stories, Rosemary Wells has retold and illustrated the tale of a little Prince who first loses his ability to walk, next, his sickly mother, then, his grief-stricken father, and, at last, his kingdom (to an opportunistic uncle—styled by Wells as a cigar-chomping, brandy-guzzling South American dictator). Francisco is banished from El Cordoba, tenderly cared for by another exile, and eventually reclaims his kingdom—with a little help from his godmother and a green cape (which works like a magic carpet).

The royal family is depicted as plump-cheeked pigs and piglets—Francisco and his father initially radiating health and happiness from their round, jowly faces, while Osvaldo oozes with an oily, over-fed shine. The royal physician is a brisk-looking goat; Francisco’s caretaker a mournful cow; and, in a brilliant move, Wells has made the lady responsible for dropping Francisco as a baby and causing his lameness, a very silly goose. Each page of this wonderful, warm story is a delight. The cozy illustrations are perfect companions to Wells’ trademark humor and storytelling skills.

Near the end of the book, the South American dictator-type uncle is scared by the reappearance of the banished Francisco, and promptly dies of his indulgences, leaving us with a moral: If you eat the right foods, and stay away from brandy, cigars, and little...
lame princes on flying green capes, then perhaps you, too, can live happily (even with your handicaps) ever after.

—Robbin Olsen Major

Westall, Robert. *Blitzcat.*


Frighteningly apropro, as we contemplate a third world holocaust, Westall’s inside picture of England, as war rockets across the mind, is painfully unforgettable. Lord Gort is an ordinary cat, who, like a strolling minstrel, ties these people at war (from one end of England to the other) together in a kind of "Canterbury tales of war." From her "real" master, a young RAF flyer; through Sergeant Smith whose best life is war; to Ollie, the old carter, whose horses follow her out of their blitzed barn in Coventry; through terrified, rear-gunner Tommy who finds his luck in her; and to all the other bedeviled humans whose lives she skirts, Lord Gort never becomes more nor less than a cat. Or, does Westhall mean her to symbolize the real world, functioning as it must, above, below and aside from human folly? Westall knows the smell and feel of war—we read that in *The Machine Gunners.* After *Blitzcat,* it is obvious Westall also knows cats.

Lord Gort arrives home, somewhat battered, older, and wiser—ready for a peaceful old age. Would we might all do the same.

—Janet Francis

Yolen, Jane. *Elfabet: An ABC of Elves.* Illustrated by Lauren Mills


Master storyteller Jane Yolen is merely along for the ride in this alliterative alphabet book populated with elves, plants, insects, and other bits of nature. There is a key at the end of the book to the plants and insects depicted. These are not the stately Elves of Tolkien’s Middle-Earth, but are, instead, large-eyed, Vulcan-eared, thin-armed little creatures who pose on each page in alliterative tableaus. There is an old-fashioned look to the illustrations (which are very nice, by the way), but at the end of the book, I was left wondering for whom the book was intended. The alliteration device has been done before—and to greater effect—but the elves themselves might still be worth the purchase.
of this title (if elves are in demand in your neighborhood). Yolen gets the by-line for this one, but it is really Mills’ book.

—Robbin Olsen Major

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Mikolaycak’s illustrations provide the perfect romantic setting for Jane Yolen’s retelling of the Scottish ballad of Jennet and how she saved Tam Lin from the fairies. Red-haired Jennet MacKenzie is an independent, fearless Scottish teenager who refuses to believe the terrible tales told of her ancestral home of Carterhaugh. Despite her parents’ pleading, she vows to claim it on her sixteenth birthday. At Carterhaugh, she meets and falls in love with Tam Lin, stolen by the fairies when he, too, was sixteen. Tam Lin is doomed to be the Fey’s (faerie) sacrifice this hallow’s eve unless his own true human love can save him. Jennet promises to do this, and despite the power of the faerie queen, she succeeds, marries Tam Lin and lives at Carterhaugh.

Yolen’s text has the rhythm of Scottish speech, especially the dialogue between Jennet and Tam Lin. The ballad unfolds before the reader as text and illustration invite you to relive a Scottish tale of romance and adventure.

—Lillian Heil

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