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Book Reviews

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Karen Newmeyer
Lovisa Lyman

See next page for additional authors

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Book Reviews

Authors
Lanell Reeder, Lillian Heil, Robbin Olsen Major, Karen Newmeyer, Lovisa Lyman, Nancy Alder, Janet Francis, Donna J. Jorgensen, Lillian Heil, and Helen Hoopes

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Book Reviews


This touching book is a black and white photo essay about the author, in the words of her daughter. If you are unaccustomed to being around the handicapped, it’s really amazing to see this blind mother paddling a canoe, tap dancing, helping at her daughter’s school, climbing a rope course in the tree tops, and participating in a family bike ride (she’s behind her husband on a bicycle built for two). The daughter explains how life is different in their family and the special things they do because their mother is blind. She also explains that she doesn’t laugh when friends at school say someone is blind because they didn’t see something, and that it’s OK to ask handicapped people questions when you are interested.

In a fresh, non-preachy way, this book does the best job I have seen of explaining the problems and wonderful capabilities of the handicapped. The text and photos are well done and real, and the narration in a child’s words is wonderful. I highly recommend this book.

—Lanell Reeder


Shiva is a young orphan girl living during the time of the "cave men." Her tribe is ruled by women, while men play an insignificant role. One day, Shiva leaves the safety of her village and ventures out to gather firewood where she is confronted by a wild, strong wolf. Knowing she is no match for the wolf, but knowing it to be her only chance for survival, Shiva throws herself upon the wolf. No match for him, she is nearing the end of her strength when miraculously, a strange boy flings himself onto the back of the wolf. He is a strange boy, misshapen head with a "heavy, chinless jaw, a monstrous bony ridge above both eyes and a bulge at the back of his skull." He is an ogre—long hated and misunderstood by Shiva’s tribe. This is an interesting look at two very primitive tribes of people who were supposed to have lived during the ice age. Except for the epilogue which begins "much of this story is true," I found this book to be of
interest in its relationships and adventure. I do not believe in the cave-
man concept, but the story does tell of an interesting twist in the
changing and growing relationships between two very different people.
—Helen Hoopes

No Nap for Benjamin Badger. Illustrated by
Dennis Nolan.

Two-and-a-half-year-old Ben Badger announces to his mother that
he’s through with naps. Mama Badger gently explains to him that for
all living creatures there’s a time to be fast and a time to be slow. As
she removes his shoes and gets him ready for a snooze she tells how
butterflies, grasshoppers, bullfrogs, spiders, and other animals take time
out for a rest. Like a lullaby, her examples lull Benjamin right off to
sleep and Mama Badger sits gratefully down and joins Ben in an
afternoon nap.

This narrative poem starts out on a rambunctious note as Ben
proclaims:

I’m two and a half
He said with a laugh.
Much too old
For taking a nap.
Haven’t you heard?
Ben Badger the Third
Who’s going to be three
Says, never,
Not ever!
No! No nap for me!

The mood gets quieter and quieter as Mama Badger gently explains how
each animal rests:

Dragonflies skimmer
The cattails and pond.
Dragonflies shimmer
To sleep with a yawn
The bugs, how they stretch
And the worms, how they curl
Believe me, my son,
It's a big napping world.

until finally Mama Badger joins in.

Then tired Mama Badger
Dropped paper and pen
Put her feet on the hassock
And napped with son Ben.

By the end of this story, you're ready to take a nap yourself. Dennis Nolan's illustrations show Ben as a pudgy (but stubborn) two-and-a-half-year-old, living in a neighborhood of cozy, shuttered, rock cottages with a mother who is gentle but imposingly tall and firm. It's a good book for nap time or a peaceful afternoon (or perhaps to create one).

—Lillian Heil

Daniel Cohen retells nine English ghost stories for children. Each is short and interesting, told almost like a newspaper account. Each story is illustrated in ghostly gray and black pencil drawings—one small, and one full-page illustration per story. The nine stories represent a variety of "ghosts," some with malevolent intentions, some benign. "The Man in Grey" is thought to bring good luck to actors at the Theatre Royal, while the "Berkeley Square Horror" is thought to be responsible for the death (by fright) of several people. The stories are told without much drama, perhaps so they won't frighten the eight to ten year old readers to whom they are aimed.

—Donna J. Jorgensen

A minister’s family must be above reproach. In fact, they should be a beacon for behavior. Father MacDougal’s family does pretty well, for the most part. Malcolm is a champion tennis player. Sherry dances like a dream and Robert swims up a storm. Annie, on the other hand,
hasn't quite found her niche. In fact, she isn't sure there is one she can fit into, or wants to. What she does want desperately is to own and love Flanagan, an Irish wolfhound the local dog breeder needs to unload.

With the help of Benny (her Father's free-thinking curate) Annie gets Flanagan, along with a lot of "conditions." Unfortunately, none of the conditions preclude Flanagan's growing inordinately large, clumsy, playful, and curious. Nor do they win the town over to his ingenuous doggy behavior.

When Flanagan leads Annie to Cora--a derelict barely surviving in the woods outside of town--he is already living on borrowed time. But Father MacDougal and his congregation need to rethink the meaning of charity; even Annie has a few things left to learn.  

—Janet Francis

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I heard about this book from a friend who had read another of Conrad's books, *Prairie Songs,* in which Solomon Butcher was a character invented by Conrad to go with some photos she had found at the Nebraska State Historical Society. This book (a kind of sequel to *Prairie Songs*) was written about the man after she did more investigation and discovered who he really was. Solomon Butcher began his career by taking formal portraits of the people who lived near him. Soon, however, he felt the need to record the history of these families and not just take their portraits. He began to take photographs of the families in front of their homestead with their horses to the side and surrounded by the things that were of most importance to them. People brought out their pianos and other musical instruments, their framed portraits, lace doilies, their cattle, their favorite dogs, and their china cabinets, carriages, and wagons. He took pictures of little boys playing their drums, a family eating watermelon, and the four sisters who each staked a claim and then took turns living with each other. His photographs are sharp and clear but most of the people have no smiles on their faces. "It obviously didn't occur to the majority of the pioneers to ham it up for the camera, or even to smile." His pictures of the old soddies are breath-taking in their details and the history of these people is forever preserved.
Conrad has tied these unique photographs together not only with interesting stories about the people portrayed, but also of the life of Samuel Butcher—pioneer historian. Anyone with an interest in the life of the pioneers will find this a fascinating book that can be enjoyed many times over. Every time I look through it, I find more details that I missed the first time around.

—Helen Hoopes


A fairy tale favorite, *Beauty and the Beast* is presented in picture book format with a translation by Richard Howard (from the De Beaumont tale) and illustrations by Hilary Knight. Both words and pictures fit the romantic tale of the beautiful girl who falls in love with the kind and generous beast, thus releasing a handsome prince from the spell of a wicked fairy.

The text uses flowery overstated language of a bygone era:

The good man ran to the room upon hearing this outcry and thought he would die of joy upon discovering his beloved daughter, and they showered embraces upon each other for over a quarter of an hour.

Knight’s illustrations reflect this same feeling. There are tall elegant girls with great masses of well-behaved hair, swan-like necks and elongated legs like none you have ever seen in real life. Even the beast is an elegant swirl of curving horns, flaring ears, and slanted eyes clad in black spiked armor or swirling red and orange cape and jacket. Beauty’s clothes are empire waisted with trains that any ordinary mortal would trip over. Her envious sisters are equally well dressed, but the colors are browns, tans, and grays in contrast to Beauty’s white, gold, and soft dusty pink gowns. The Camelot-like illustrations fit with this idealistic romance showing that the virtuous girl is rewarded by a happy life (as well as being absolutely gorgeous).

—Lillian Heil

A young orphan boy uses his wits (and a little help from his friends) to escape first from the orphanage and then from the clutches of his nasty, rotten great-uncle. The Great Chaffalo, the marvelously talented—though unfortunately deceased—magician lends just the magic touch that is needed to boost Touch, our hero, over the edge.

Sid Fleishman does have a way with words! His colorful and catchy phrases and descriptions brighten an entertaining story.

—Nancy Alder


From accounts of the historical Saint Valentine, through courtship, marriage, and honeymoon, Barker-Graham traces the history of love. Along the way, she picks up terms like "Victorian," "card," "chocolate" and "melancholy." Her delightful sense of humor (in a modern context, not that of the middle ages—which the book defines as the doctor's ability to determine the balance of humors or fluids in the patient's body) carries the theme along past words like "humor," "silk," "swashbuckler," and "garter," which take a little manipulating to fit into the context. Illustrations are simple and add to the presentation. The book should appeal to all lovers and potential lovers, especially close to Valentine's Day.

—Lovisa Lyman


Sixteen-year-old Bodie takes on a temporary job doing farm chores for a neighbor. The injury that has the neighbor laid up looks suspicious—and his wife is missing. What else could it mean but murder? Bodie—helped by ten-year-old sister, Gracie, and best friend, Zach—uncover obscure clues, follow leads and try some tricky maneuvers to find the body and unmask the killer.

Hall writes with wit and a real sense of what's what with teenagers. The story moves along quickly and believably with lots of humor and
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plausible, but very funny scenes. The characters are real—no lifeless characters or bumbling adults versus savvy kids here. A super read.

—Nancy Alder

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This book can not be seen without being picked up. The title is unusual and the illustrations are detailed, realistic, and irresistible. Not only that, but there's a BIG gorilla on the cover who appears to be speaking to a small rodent sitting on his hand. Each page turned reveals a poem across the page from a full color painting of two animals which usually have only one thing in common: their names rhyme (Beagle and Eagle, Hippopotamus and Platypus, Cassowary and Dromedary, Kinkajou and Cockatoo).

I like this book and would recommend it for purchase because of its novelty and the marvelous watercolor illustrations, but not for the poetry or geography. The animals that appear together are usually very different from each other, and while this nonsense may be comical to an adult, it bothers me to show a child a Central American Kinkajou on the same beach with an Australian Cockatoo. I found the text stilted and awkward to read aloud, and although written in verse, it has little flow or rhythm.

—Lanell Reeder

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* Lyon, George Ella. *Cecil's Story.* Illustrated by Peter Catalanotto.
PB Unpaginated.

Cecil narrates a simple "what-if" story in this book, showing the ravages of war on the ones who stayed at home. The paintings that expand the brief text are rich with tangible light and emotional connotations.

Some days, when you're doing the farm work at the neighbors where you have to stay if Mama goes to nurse Papa, Cecil tells us, you wouldn't cry 'til nighttime, wiping your face on your shirt. And you would know that if Papa didn't get back, you could take care of Mama, doing the things Papa taught you before he went to war—maybe.
14 Brigham Young University

This is a beautifully executed combination of rich painting and gripping feelings. Cecil's war may have been a century and a half ago, but this book is as current as Desert Storm.

—Janet Francis

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MacDonald, Suse & Oakes, Bill. *Once Upon Another.*


PB $12.89. 32 pp.

Read from front to back, and you have the story of "The Tortoise and the Hare" with clever, abstract collage illustrations. The reader finds the story in the shapes and colors of the pictures. Now turn the book round and read from back to front, and you have the story of "The Lion and the Mouse" using the same pages of abstract illustrations. Feeling a bit of doubt? Too gimmicky do you think? Let me tell you, it works. The reader can truly and clearly see now, the hare dashing off in a blaze of glory while tortoise plods behind, and now, the searing anger of the lion as the frightened mouse cowers.

The stories are well-told versions of the tales we know and love—enjoyable on their own. The marvelously clever illustrations—just as clearly right for either story—draw the reader in, engage the imagination, and make the book truly unique to each reader. A great jumping off place for art exercises or prompt for story starters.

—Nancy Alder

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Mahy, Margaret. *Aliens in the Family.*


FI $2.95. 174 pp.

Ever wonder if there's an alien in your family? Read about a put-together family (a man and his daughter, and a woman and her son, Lewis, and daughter, Dora) who think of each other as aliens until Bond, the real alien, arrives. Bond, a creature from Galgonqua (wherever that is) arrives on earth for his test before being advanced onward in his schooling. His path crosses the makeshift family and the latter try to help Bond pass his test. In the process, they discover each other, and by the end of the adventure, have become a real family who like each other despite their radically different approaches to life.

Mahy does a convincing job of making very different people come to life—Jake, the independent girl who is the one who takes care of her divorced mother (appropriately nicknamed Pet); Dora (Jake's stepsister)
who loves frilly clothes, curls, and happy endings; Dora’s younger brother, Lewis, who is trying to make sense out of life with a new stepfather; and Bond, the alien who does bond the three children together to David and Phillipa, the affectionate parents trying to bring their respective children together. Her description of time warping is vivid (Bond does this to escape what he assumes are enemies), but the fact that the "enemies" were really friends testing him made the climax seem like an anticlimax. It is a good thing the return-to-normal time was so vividly described. It helps the reader maintain interest after discovering that the enemy wasn’t real after all.

—Lillian Heil

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Cat owners will understand *Six-Dinner Sid*, the story of a cat who lives at six adjacent apartments because he is a six-dinner cat. The cat owners didn’t know about Sid’s large appetite until he caught a cold and was taken to the same veterinarian six separate times. The vet told on Sid and his collective owners got together and decided to limit him to one meal a day. What did Sid do? He moved to a new street, Phythagoras Place, to live in six different adjacent apartments because, as I said before, he was a six-dinner-a-day cat. The neighbors on his new street all talked to each other, so right from the beginning, they knew about Sid’s six dinners and they didn’t mind (which must have been a big relief to Sid).

Inga Moore’s story is fun because it captures the spirit of independence that is the essence of cat nature. Her illustrations are both catlike and funny, with just an occasional touch of making the cat look a bit human e.g. when he sits with rounded tummy—after the sixth dinner—looking extremely pleased with himself; or the mad look when he has to swallow six spoonfuls of medicine.

The narrative’s dry wit fits the story perfectly as the author describes how “Sid had to work hard for his dinners. It wasn’t easy being six people’s pet. He had six different names to remember and six different ways to behave” (from aristocratic snob to the tough cat who terrorizes the neighborhood dogs). The repetition of six provides a satisfying structure to the story with a description of being scratched in six different ways and sleeping in six different beds and of course the six different trips to the vet. Leaving his first six homes to go to six
new ones (because he was a six-dinner-a-day cat) was the perfect ending for the story of a truly independent feline.

—Lillian Heil

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B Naden, Corinne J. and Blue, Rose. *Teacher in Space: Christa Mcauliffe*. Illustrated by NASA.


PB 48 pp.

This book tells the story of Christa Mcauliffe (the first teacher in space) who died in the Challenger disaster. She had a life-long dream of space travel. The book begins with her life story and parallels it with the development of the space program. Christa was chosen (out of 11,000 applicants) for her love of teaching and her adventurous spirit. When asked what special project she would suggest if chosen, she answered "To keep a space journal, an ordinary person’s diary, just as the earlier American pioneers did when they traveled West."

Overall, this is quite an up-beat biography, focusing more on the qualities that made Christa Mcauliffe an outstanding teacher than on the final disaster. She was full of life, dedicated to her family and students, and unconcerned with herself and the fame that accompanied her selection as the first civilian in space.

—Karen Newmeyer

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NF Unpaginated.

This Italian tale, translated and illustrated by Eric Jon Nones, is a Rapunzel-like story, peopled with a benevolent witch, a beautiful blonde, four bad witches, and the proverbial wicked step-mother.

The illustrations are rich and elegant without being pretentious. The tale itself, however, is not fully fleshed out, though this may well be the fault of the original tale and not to be blamed on Nones. The last third of the story, in fact, is particularly devoid of detail, as if some long-ago storyteller had tired of spinning out his tale and decided to wind it to a close with as few embellishments as possible.

Nevertheless, this is an attractive book with much to recommend it—not the least of which is its similarity to the more-familiar story of Rapunzel.

—Robbin Olsen Major
Gary Paulsen’s *Canyons* is similar to Pam Service’s *Vision Quest*. In both stories, teenagers living in the present are prevailed upon by Indian spirits of the past to put their remains, or their sacred stones, in the proper place so that the spirits can be at peace. In Paulsen’s book, Brennan, the son of a single parent, finds a skull on a camping trip. Both the canyon and the skull seem to be whispering to him to do something. Taking the skull with him, he gets help in finding out its history from a biology teacher and then realizes that he must return the skull to its proper resting place. His quest is complicated by his mother’s discovery of the skull because she calls in the police. Brennan must then elude concerned adults to restore the skull to its sacred place.

Paulsen writes vividly, and his knowledge of survival skills and the outdoors make the story both exciting and convincing. Such passages as the following let you know he has lived on the desert:

> Off to the edge of a dun he saw a yucca plant, the spiny base looking like a porcupine hunkered in the shadows. He went to the plant and squinted, trying to see better in the darkness . . .
> He worked it back and forth and broke it off even with the base down in the spines.
> With a little more effort he broke the stalk in two and put one broken end to his lips.
> The end fairly dripped with liquid. He tasted it and found the fluid to be a sweet-tasting water—almost like watermelon.

If I hadn’t read Service’s story first, I would have been even more impressed. Her story is long enough to let the present-day character become much better acquainted with the Indian spirit she makes contact with than Paulsen does in his book. Service’s final chase is from thieves with the intent to do bodily harm rather than from concerned parents and rescue workers, and because of that, the tension and excitement is much higher than in Paulsen’s narrative. Both stories are well done. Service’s is more convincing and seems more original, perhaps because it was written first.

—Lillian Heil

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If you’ve ever wished you could redo an absolutely rotten day of your life, you’ll enjoy this fantasy about a TV that allows you to return to any part of the previous 24 hours and relive that time. Three eleven-year-olds, Kelly, her twin brother, Scott, and Miri, her best friend experiment with changing the past. Kelly wants the discovery to make her famous; her twin brother wants to sell the TV and make millions; Miri really wants no part of it. Before any of their plans work out, however, Miri’s grandfather is shot in a store robbery. Miri, who hates the feel of time travel, decides to use it to save her grandfather from the gun shot injury and possible death.

The story seemed kind of light weight until the crisis with Miri’s grandfather came along. Before that, Kelly’s exaggerated opinion of her own fame, and Scott’s equally extreme desire to make millions, didn’t seem to fit what eleven-year-olds would be interested in. But when Miri decided to relive the time when her grandfather was robbed and shot, the story took off and the tension was real. Trying to save the grandfather she loved was a convincing goal for a sixth-grade girl and the way she succeeded in changing the past was a real cliff hanger. She didn’t really know when or how the burglar arrived and when she couldn’t convince her grandfather to leave the store before the robber appeared, Miri had to improvise her plans to keep her grandfather from being shot. If you can make it through the first two thirds of the book, you’ll enjoy the last part.

—Lillian Heil

After watching a Saturday afternoon vampire movie, Jonathan decides he wants to be a vampire. His mother makes him a cape, he paints his face white, slicks his hair back with salad oil, and buys some plastic vampire teeth. His costume is quite a success. But his teacher (Mildred Van Helsing) complains that he has been threatening to bite the other children. Then real vampires (or wempires, as they call themselves) sneak in his room one night, make sardine and onion sandwiches, mess up the kitchen, and only leave when his mother orders them out of the house.

I am a great fan of Daniel Pinkwater. However, I found this book rather pointless (of course there is never a point to a Pinkwater book).
The illustrations are typical Pinkwater (he is no artist) but fun. The teacher’s name was a nice touch, but no seven-year-old child is going to have read Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. His humor is a strangely child-like, yet too dry and subtle for children. However, children would still enjoy it. It is harmless and rather quaint.

—Karen Newmeyer

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These two titles, along with previously published *Spring Festivals* and *Autumn Festivals* comprise an informative set. Illustrated with full-color photographs of the various celebrations, these books could be a useful reference for students doing reports on holidays or particular countries, though in the last case, access would be difficult. One of the interesting details in the summer book is the account of the origin of the May Day holiday and how it was reinstated in industrialized Europe after trade unions were begun. Before unions, factory workers had no holidays. After unions, workers had shorter hours and May 1 became a special holiday for them.

Many winter festivals are related to the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. Ancient peoples saw this date as a beginning of happier times as days grew longer and warmer. Christmas occurring only a few days after the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere, adopted many of the traditions of the more ancient celebrations of solstice as well as those of other winter holidays. Winter solstice in the southern hemisphere occurs in June. Christian holidays are often related to this date as well. Carnival, Chinese New Year, and snow festivals round out the book. Both books are good acquisitions for grade schools and public libraries.

—Lovisa Lyman

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The story begins and ends with the King’s death. In between is the poignant tale of a poor southern boy’s rise to fame and fortune. Most of the story is no different than in other books about Elvis Presley.
What distinguishes Rubel’s treatment are the hints about the ways Elvis was manipulated by his family, friends, and especially, by his manager, Colonel Tom. Rubel colors Elvis with honesty and sympathy.

But it isn’t only the story of Elvis Presley. It is the story of Rock and Roll. Rubel gives credit where it is due by sketching other singers, black and white, who contributed to Elvis’ style. For the youthful sixties buff, this is a good investment.

—Lovisa Lyman

The Frog Prince, Continued addresses that age-old question: What happens after "happily ever after?" In this particular story, Scieszka reports that the Frog Prince misses life on a lilypad and so sets out on a quest to return to his previous incarnation.

The story is drolly told and the pictures, from dragonfly endpapers to bug-eyed Prince, are worth hours of study. Each little froggy detail is subtle and hysterical. (There is also a noteworthy poisoned apple awash with gore.)

Even readers unacquainted with the original tale will find myriad things to like about this enjoyable collaboration.

—Robbin Olsen Major

Stephen Shott’s first picture catalog for the very young has a well-organized array of photos of the various objects in baby’s world. They do tend to be "yuppy" objects—perhaps that was his intended audience. The pages are thicker than normal but this is not a board book. Each object is accompanied by a neatly printed name. All in all, pleasing to look at and loaded with variety.

—Donna Jorgensen
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NF 128 pp.

It's easy to discount teenage depression as stage, or something all teens go through. In fact, depression at any age is a serious disease that requires treatment. Silverstein gives a well-researched overview of depression, its symptoms and methods of treatment. Early in the book, there is a tendency to sacrifice writing style for getting in all of the facts, and some readers may be tempted to set the book aside. Later chapters are more treatment-oriented, however, and more interesting. Every library with young adult patrons should have a book like this. The value of Silverstein's book is not limited to the adolescent reader, though. The information should be read by parents and friends of depressed teens as well.

—Lovisa Lyman

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PB Unpaginated.

In this book, by singer/songwriter Carly Simon, a girl loves and is left by a fisherman seeking solitude.

This is a picture book, but it isn't really a children's book. The story (such as it is) has little in it to appeal to the audience to which (I assume) it is targeted. The illustrations (each framed in nautical rope—a nice touch!) are okay, but the book as a whole leaves me wondering what kind of a child might want to read it.

—Robbin Olsen Major

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A Siracusa, Catherine. *No Mail for Mitchell.*
FI PB Mitchell the dog is a mailman. He delivers all sorts of mail on his route every day, but Mitchell, himself, never gets any mail. One windy, rainy day, his boss, Mr. Pig, calls and asks him to come in and deliver a special delivery package for Bobby Beaver's birthday. The next few days, Mitchell spends in bed with a terrible cold. He feels sad, until Mr. Pig brings him a bag of get-well mail. He's happy he finally gets some mail.
Kids love and identify with mailmen. They're the one community helper that comes to their home every day. Just like Mitchell, kids just can’t wait to get their own mail, and know how miserable it is to be sick. This is a "Step into Reading" book, Step 1. The drawings are pleasant, the format easy to manage, the text easy to see and read, and though it’s easy reading, the text sounds like natural language. A great easy reader.

—Lanell Reeder

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A

BI

PB
40 pp.

The Princess Ka’iulani (which means the royal sacred one) of Hawaii was born in 1875, in the last days of the Hawaiian monarchy. She was second in line for the throne held by her uncle, King Kalakaua. Her mother died when she was eleven, but before her death, Ka’iulani’s mother told her that she had seen the future and that Ka’iulani would travel far from her home, she would never marry, and that she would never rule Hawaii. These predictions each came true. She was educated in England, America annexed Hawaii and threw down the monarchy, and she died when she was only 23, having never married.

This is a heart breaking story of the end of an era and the loss of a way of life. The Princess Ka’iulani was only 17 when she traveled to Washington, DC to plead with President Cleveland for her country. Although charmed by her, he was unwilling to do very much, but did block annexation for as long as he was President. However, annexation eventually came and Ka’iulani essentially died of a broken heart.

The illustrations alone make this book worth getting. It is beautifully written and illustrated by a mother/daughter team.

—Karen Newmeyer

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A

4+
Illustrated by Robert Sabuda.

NF

PB

Steve Lowe has selected excerpts from Henry Thoreau’s journal which relates the events which occurred when the latter went to Walden Pond and lived by himself for two years: how he built his house, planted a garden, observed animals and seasons. From this journal,
Thoreau later wrote his most famous book, *Walden*. Lowe's text selections are illustrated with linoleum cut prints by Robert Sabuda. The rough hewn look of the prints captures the back-to-nature type of experience that 25-year-old Thoreau had at Walden Pond. This picture book presentation of *Walden* is a quietly thoughtful book as Thoreau comments on: the meaning of gardening—"To make the earth say beans instead of grass;" his quiet contemplation of nature—"I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise 'til noon, rapt in a revery . . . in undisturbed solitude and stillness;" playing the flute at evening in a solitary boat on the pond—"I saw the perch, which I seem to have charmed, hovering around me;" or listening in early spring to red squirrels under his house—"red squirrels got under my house directly under my feet as I sat reading or writing and kept up the queerest chuckling and chirruping and vocal pirouetting and gurgling sounds that ever were heard."

It is not a book which young children would easily understand—most of the time they are pretty action oriented. The number of fourth, fifth, or sixth graders who would appreciate it may be limited unless the mood were just right. Robert Burleigh's 1985 book entitled *A Man Named Thoreau* would be a better introduction to Thoreau, but this picture book would be marvelous to have along with the Burleigh biography because the quotes and illustrations catch the quiet mood of the time Thoreau spent at Walden Pond e.g. birds circling over tree tops at sunset, the red glow of sun on the lake at the end of summer, the cold blue of deep winter in contrast to the warm light from a cabin window. The text and pictures carry the reader through the seasons from fall, winter, spring, summer, and then back to the fall of that first year spent at Walden Pond.

—Lillian Heil

Savina: The Gypsy Dancer is a beautifully illustrated book about a young Gypsy girl who not only loves to dance, but who also has the ability to gladden the hearts of all those who watch her dance. When the king of the land sees the effect that Savina has upon his people, he becomes fearful. He is afraid that because she has such control over his people when she dances, she might become a danger to his throne. He suggests that Savina live in his castle where he can have power over her and over who is allowed to watch her dance. Savina’s parents, in true
Gypsy fashion, fear that Savina would not be happy if she were caged like a bird. Fearful of the reaction of his people—especially of his wife's fascination with Savina—the king sends the Gypsies on their way but immediately begins plotting to get custody of Savina without his wife's knowledge. The remainder of the story revolves around this plot.

Nolan has created a wonderful world full of Gypsies. His colors are deep, dark, and mysterious. Somehow, he has managed to capture the firelight and shadow of the Gypsy fires. Tompert has created a story that communicates the family unity and strength of character of the Gypsies and the joy Savina finds only in her dancing.

—Helen Hoopes

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NF


This book gives some of the historical background of Yellowstone Park and what led up to the "let-it-burn" policy for naturally caused forest fires. While fire is part of the natural cycle for forest lands, various circumstances came together in the summer of 1988 that caused the devastating "Great" fire.

The photos are quite spectacular tracking the progress of the fire and documenting the fight to save Old Faithful Lodge. While the emphasis is on the fire itself, the last few pages cover the aftermath of the fire, the return of the animals, and the natural reseeding of the forest. It is an interesting and informative book.

—Karen Newmeyer

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Wahl, Jan (retold by). *Tailypo!* Illustrated by Wil Clay.

PB


This book recounts the eerie tale of an old man who goes out hunting for something to eat and gets a whole lot more than he bargained for.

Wahl's retelling is nothing new. In fact, there is nothing to distinguish it from previous versions since it is a classic "scary story" and difficult to improve upon.
Clay’s illustrations, however, are wonderful in their detail. The old man’s face as his calm turns to terror is especially expressive. The colors are by turns warm and cool, and the mood evoked is very in keeping with the tale. The creature (which wants its tailypo back!) is never fully shown (unlike previous versions of the story). This is a wise choice for a tale that, for maximum effectiveness, should never be illustrated at all.

Read aloud once, this book will be returned to again and again—perhaps even causing the most patient of parents to cry: "Go ahead and give it back its darn tailypo—and let’s read something by Dr. Seuss for a change!"

—Robbin Olsen Major

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PB $13.95. Unpaginated.

*Fritz and the Mess Fairy* is a tale of an untidy young skunk and a science fair project gone awry. Fritz trails through his day leaving disaster in his wake and, in the evening, recalls that his science project is due the next morning. He works on it late into the night, but his imprecise following of scientific procedure results in the appearance of the Mess Fairy who makes Fritz’s messes look like the work of a rank amateur!

The Mess Fairy is a hot pink, tusked sow with aqua blue antennae and lavender wings. Her antics, Fritz and his family, and a laugh-aloud ending make this a good choice for reading aloud.

—Robbin Olsen Major

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A Wells, Rosemary. *Max’s Dragon Shirt.*
PB $10.95. Unpaginated.

Small but determined Max is back and in fine form! His sister, Ruby, takes him shopping and, temporarily side-tracked, leaves him in the dressing room while she chooses outfits to try on (just for fun). Max makes his way through the department store, his mind fixed firmly on a certain dragon shirt, and capable Ruby (as usual) must deal with the consequences.
Wells’ simply-worded text and engaging pictures are, as always, a delight. Max is a sturdy little hero who is big on appeal for young children.

—Robbin Olsen Major

PB $11.89. 32 pp.

Audrey Wood writes, and wonderfully illustrates something I suspect all children can relate to. "The boy’s" parents are weird. They do weird things like yell "Bye-bye honeycakes" when the bus leaves and shake hands with all his friends. In the end, he decides he can stand it after all because they’re his parents. Weird and colorful pictures accompany this weird and wonderful story.

—Donna J. Jorgensen


*Sky Dogs* recounts the legend of how horses—the "sky dogs" of the title—came to the Blackfeet Indians.

Told in first person, in a strong Native American voice (which storyteller Yolen has captured masterfully), the book is illustrated with earth-toned gold/rust/orange pictures as beautiful and distinctive as all of Moser’s past efforts have been. *Sky Dogs* is the very successful joint effort of two gifted artists, each enhancing the other’s craft with their own unique contribution to the whole.

—Robbin Olsen Major

B Zalben, Jane Breskin. *Goldie’s Purim*.  

Goldie, one of the daughters in a family of Jewish bears, is chosen to play Esther in the annual Purim play. She is frightened when it is time to step onto the stage, but as she overcomes her fear, she comes to better understand and appreciate Esther’s dilemma. Cunning illustrations show bears clothed and surrounded by county motifs in their home and synagog. Though the pictures are delightful, and the plot...
viable, one wonders why the author chose to illustrate a Bible story with bears. Somehow it trivializes the historical theme, though children may enjoy it anyway.

—Lovisa Lyman

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