1992

Book Reviews

Jan Staheli
Karen Newmeyer
Sarah Benson
Lynn Lonsdale
Susan Broman

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Staheli, Jan; Newmeyer, Karen; Benson, Sarah; Lonsdale, Lynn; Broman, Susan; Kupitz, Gabi; Francis, Janet; Jorgensen, Donna; Turner, Vicky M.; Bailey, Marilyn; Hoopes, Helen; Heil, Lillian; and Tunnell, Michael O. (1992) "Book Reviews," Children's Book and Media Review: Vol. 13 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol13/iss3/4
Book Reviews

Authors

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol13/iss3/4

**Reviewed by Jan Staheli**

It is autumn of 1820, and the Bassett family is preparing to have their traditional Thanksgiving feast. Pies and breads have been baked, vegetables are ready for cooking, and the turkey and pig are ready for dressing and roasting. Then the distressing news arrives that Mrs. Bassett's mother is very ill and she must come immediately.

With both mother and father gone, the eight children are left to care for each other and the house and farm. Fourteen-year-old Tilly and sixteen-year-old Eph take the responsibility seriously and keep all in order for the rest of the day and evening. But the next day, Tilly decides the Thanksgiving feast should be prepared as planned so all will be ready when Ma and Pa return that evening. The children attack the preparations with energy and creative license, even though there is a near disaster with a "bear." All is ready when the Bassetts return with the good news that Granma is going to be fine. The feast is eaten and the party following is greatly enjoyed by everyone.

This is an amiable little story in the best Alcott tradition. Written in 1881, it was first printed in *St. Nicholas* magazine, seven years before the author died. It presents us with a loving family, with children who get into scrapes and make mistakes, but who love and forgive each other as a matter of course. It gives wonderful details of life on a frontier farm, and of the traditional Thanksgiving celebrations of that time. I would recommend it for any library or classroom collection to use as Thanksgiving/cultural background, or to expand a study of Louisa May Alcott—her writing style, characters, and era.

★★★★


**Reviewed by Jan Staheli**

Jase is on his own and headed in the general direction of Memphis. Feeling kind of down, and "hungry as a hog," he stops to rest and meets the strangest looking dog he's ever seen.
8 Brigham Young University

He looked like he had started out to be a hound, then decided he’d look better as a porcupine. His face looked like somebody had stuck pine needles all in it. . . . And his eyes were not like any dog’s eyes I’d ever seen. They were glassy looking. . . . I stood there looking at him and for a minute I misdoubted he was really a dog at all.

This begins an adventure for both boy and dog that will take them into maturity and bittersweet happiness. They will help easy-going Lute, who wants to be sheriff so he can win the Widow Jarkey’s affection. They will learn to hunt with old Emory, who really knows dogs, but can’t figure this one out. And they will learn to love each other as only a boy and a dog can.

Bristle Face was originally published in 1965 and won several awards. It has been reissued, and will be a delight to all who read it. Written in the rhythms of the backwoods South, the book is funny and engaging, sweet and sad. The characters are likeable, and they immediately involve the reader in their lives. I would wholeheartedly recommend this book, especially for reading aloud, to girls—and especially boys—in grades 5 through 9.


Reviewed by Michael O. Tunnell

When Lydia becomes too old and ill to keep a pet, she sends her little Cornish rex cat to live with an agent and travel the cat-show circuit. Purloom Popcorn—odd-looking with his one gold eye and one blue eye—can only faintly remember Lydia’s warm lap and loving embraces. His life now is one of a Grand Champion, living in travel cages and being admired from a distance. When word comes that Lydia is dead and that her will instructs that Purloom be returned home, the cat is indignant. Melinda, Lydia’s grandniece, has always wanted a cat, but the strange-looking, ill-tempered Cornish rex proves to be a disappointment. Purloom doesn’t like the house, the little girl, and especially the other cats that are around. When Purloom discovers that the cats are ghosts, his resolve to run away is strengthened. Then Lydia’s ghost appears, and he begins to remember how good things were when he was a kitten, when all the ghostly cats were alive and helping to raise him. Lydia also has one gold and one blue eye, and Purloom discovers that, like his owner, it is through the blue eye that he is able to see the “other world.” However, knowing he can never sit on a ghostly lap, Purloom decides he still must leave. Lydia sadly agrees to help and tries to plant the suggestion in the minds of Melinda’s parents that they should return Purloom to the cat-show circuit. Instead, they decide on the
pound! Purloom Popcorn accepts his fate, but then he is strangely touched by
the sight of Melinda sleeping and recalls the things she has done to try to be his
friend. He rubs against her, and she awakens to find a changed cat, a cat who
wants to be a part of her life.

Bauer has created a nicely-paced short novel with a unique plot that will
cause readers to forever wonder what marvelous, unseen things cats with
different colored eyes are perceiving. Bauer's writing is laced with subtle
humor and yet with a wonderful poignancy. Purloom's complaining results in
a particularly delightful element of the story. As the cat pines for the "good
life," he reels off the names of dozens of cat-circuit cities while wondering how
he can find his way to any one of them. "... I'm on my way to Portland. Or
maybe I'll try Atlanta." Of course, Purloom has no sense of distance or
direction. Illustrations by Trina Schart Hyman are a welcome complement to
the story.


Alden, a wealthy and spoiled teenager, hits and kills an old man as he and
his friend, Brad, are driving home from a drinking party. Alden’s father, an
influential judge, helps his son to cover up the crime; but Brad, drunk as he
was, knows something terrible has happened. The tramp’s daughter (Ellen)
arrives looking for her father, and she and Brad discover the plot. Brad
confronts Alden but really can’t prove anything until Alden’s browbeaten mother
decides her husband is wrong and her son must pay for his crime. A wiser
Brad enters college and finds a forgiving Ellen waiting for him.

Bennett’s mystery stories fill a need because they have action and
excitement, but the writing is pretty trite. The author’s language is full of
hackneyed phrases such as "his eyes wildly trying to pierce the black night," "a
sharp, metallic sound pierced the night," "a panther with glowing eyes," "its
gnarled branches, like black twisted arms, raised bitterly against the sky." The
words sound too calculated preventing the reader from getting involved with the
characters. The ending is contrived—people change too fast and everything is
so neatly resolved that it makes the story seem unbelievable. At the end, all
seems lost because of a convincing coverup, and suddenly, Alden’s sad, silent
mother decisively steps forward to confront son and husband and force them to
accept the consequences. The final loose end is Ellen (the hit and run victim’s
daughter) who bids farewell to Brad because he is a spoiled rich kid (even
though she is attracted to him) who won’t even tell the police what he knows.
When the bad guys are brought to justice, Brad enrolls in college, and behold, Ellen is at the same one. All is forgiven and they immediately fall into each other’s arms. Unbelievable!

The story will appeal to some slower, inexperienced readers because it is easy to read and there is a lot of action, but hopefully, teachers and parents will help them to move to stories which are better told than one.


A 6+ FI Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

*Along the Tracks*, translated from the Hebrew by Michael Swirsky, is the story of Yankele and his family who, fleeing Nazi-occupied Poland, enter Russia as refugees. The father had joined the Russian army before the fighting had reached Yankele’s village, and, wanting to get even with the Germans, and not knowing the dangers that await them, leaves his family. Shortly thereafter, the rest of the family must leave their home to escape persecution. The train on which they are escaping is bombed, and at eight years old, Yankele is separated from his mother and little sister. The book chronicles his journeys through Russia as he journeys by train and by foot along the railroad tracks—always searching for his family. He meets many interesting people along the way who are both kind and vicious. He learns how to climb into the coal bins in the train yards to find shelter from the bitter cold and to scrounge food from the most unlikely sources. He makes friends and loses them. Constantly, he is searching for his mother.

These adventures are remarkable, especially when you consider that they are based on the true adventures of a friend of the author’s. Here is a child who, through his courage and strength, manages to survive years of hardship and suffering with courage and dignity. He is changed forever and so is the reader. The author uses lots of dialogue to help us understand the sufferings of this small boy and artfully and skillfully tells this story of persistence and valor. A remarkable experience you will not soon forget.

Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Opus wanted to fly. As he watched the snow ducks take off and soar, he would lift his own small wings and whisper, "Fly!" to himself; but—being a penguin—he could not fly. He ordered a Flap-O-Matic which didn’t look very safe. And then, he knew how to solve his problem. He wrote a letter to Santa Claus, asking for wings that worked. Santa knew his wish, but some very surprising things happened before Opus’ wish came true.

This is a sweet book about impossible wishes, and doing your best, and knowing who you are, and loving others—told simply and without heavy handedness. Opus saves Santa because he is a fine swimmer, and the snow ducks take him for a flight to thank him for his bravery. I would recommend this to anyone looking for a new Christmas picture book.


Reviewed by Marilyn Bailey

Because Sally’s bedroom is so incredibly messy, it decides to go to her school and tell her how it feels. After being awfully embarrassed, Sally hurries back home to an empty bedroom—the bedroom got caught in traffic. Then she decides, by herself, that a clean room will allow her to do many more things and the messy bedroom gets cleaned up—step by step.

This is a great book for parents to read to older pre-schoolers, or for second or third graders to read to themselves. Children get tired of being told over and over to clean their rooms, but when the room itself objects, the child will be more inclined to listen. This fantasy has darling illustrations—I loved the people’s reactions when the messy bedroom marches down the street. Even my nine-year-old loved this book, although I didn’t see any difference in the condition of her room.

**A Pre-2 PB** Reviewed by Marilyn Bailey

Norman the alligator is frustrated because all his friends are losing their baby teeth and he doesn’t have any teeth yet to leave with the tooth fairy. After Norman fools his friends by putting a piece of licorice over his tooth, he comes up with the brilliant idea to fool the tooth fairy by giving her a fake tooth. Before Norman can follow through, however, he starts feeling guilty and, thinking that the tooth monster is after him, he throws the fake tooth out. The very next day, his loose tooth falls out while he is eating his peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich, the tooth fairy comes that night, and all is well.

This would be a great book for children in second grade to read alone, or in first grade, to read with assistance, or to read to kindergartners. My own children’s teeth always started coming out a year later than most boys and girls, which really worried them that they wouldn’t come out at all. I think this book would have helped put them at ease. The charming pictures are fun for everybody to look at, and children should enjoy trying to name the five different kinds of animals. What really makes this book worthwhile, however, are the illustrated directions in the back on how to take care of your teeth.

★★★★


**4+ FI** Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Imagine that you are a sixteen-year-old girl living in an isolated home in upper New York State, and that you are home alone on a bitterly cold and snowy night. Suddenly, you hear a terribly loud roar overhead, followed by an explosion that rocks your house. Your first thoughts are of meteors or bombs, but as you struggle through the cold, icy night, you gradually realize that bits and pieces of something metal—as well as the more devastating bits and pieces of flesh—are scattered in the woods behind your house. And then the screams begin. People are alive. In that impossibly tangled, scattered metal, people are alive! A huge airliner has crashed in your back yard and you are the only one there to help!

Compelling reading. Pick this one up and you will not put it down until all the living have been rescued, and until—as unlikely as it seems—you may have found love.

★★★★

**A 4-6 FI**

Reviewed by Lillian Heil

Jeremy Thatcher discovers that dragon hatching isn’t easy, although the rewards are wonderful, as he trades picture images with a growing dragon. Jeremy gets the unusual task of protecting a baby dragon when in his hurry to avoid being kissed by a sixth grade classmate (ugh), he finds a strange shop in the small town he’d grown up in. His adventure begins when the shopkeeper agrees to sell him a ball, shimmering with color, for 25 cents (a dragon’s egg). Jeremy learns the responsibilities and problems of caring for the dragon, Tiamat, (invisible to everyone but Jeremy and his sixth grade classmate, Mary Lou) who grows so rapidly Jeremy has to house her in a barn. But Jeremy’s real problem is how to give up a friend he loves when it is time for Tiamat to go to her own world.

Coville is a masterful writer of fantasy. His descriptions of the dragon world as "a world of ferocious beauty. High volcanic mountains capped with plumes of smoke and ash were feeding fire to the sky" make the reader wish to be in Jeremy’s place. Coville’s choice of a budding artist as the human guardian for Tiamat is perfect because they have to communicate with visual images and Tiamat says she chose Jeremy because "I liked the colors in your head. I knew we could share beautiful pictures." The author’s consistency in building a "logical" character for the dragon is evidenced by the small brown spot she always leaves on the pillow where her breath scorched the pillowcase, along with her fascination with fire. Coville also makes full and hilarious use of all possibilities when the dragon, invisible to humans but not to the family dog and cats, joins the dinner party for the head of the school board, and his wife and daughter. When the candlelight goes on, the dragon swishes in, the animals go wild, and the fun begins.

Coville has created a world where fantasy and real life characters can exist side by side as he spins out a tale of friendship and responsibility. You’ll want to help hatch a dragon yourself.

★★★★
14 Brigham Young University


* 4-7 NF Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Part of the Could You ever? series, this is a fascinating, comprehensible book which examines the nature of time, time machines, and time travel. Dr. Darling makes references to the fascination writers of fiction have had with the concept of time travel and the many confusing consequences if it were to really occur. His explanation of Einstein’s theory of relativity is plain and thorough.

Many color photographs and drawings enrich the text. I found myself engrossed in the possibilities, and understanding the speed of light and black holes in a way I have never managed before. An excellent book.

★★★★


A Pre+ PB Reviewed by Jan Staheli

A swanherd named Baptiste sits playing his reed pipe when a strange old man in a green coat comes to him. He plays such an enchanting melody that Baptiste must learn it; however, Greencoat wants to be paid. Baptiste has nothing to pay with but a gold band around his wrist which he has had since he was found as a baby and which grows with him and never comes off. So Greencoat runs away, enchanting the swans to fly away also.

Baptiste follows, finds a palace and a beautiful princess, passes the test by virtue of his gold wrist band, marries the princess, and lives happily ever after.

The story is an old French fairy tale, written simply and traditionally, but the real show-stoppers here are the illustrations by Mr. deChristopher. Glowing oil paintings covering the entire page are done in the pastoral manner and capture, perfectly, the essence of this story. This is truly beautiful—a gem of a book.

★★★★

Reviewed by Marilyn Bailey

*Pre-2 FI PB*

Four brave, tiny kittens try to scare different animals, but end up being scared themselves. When a puppy tries to scare them, they surprise themselves by scaring the puppy away.

This is an excellent book to read to preschoolers, or even for first or second graders to read to themselves. Young children will love the brilliant pictures, the rhyming scheme and the repetitive parts, and especially participating in making the animal sounds.

四四四


Reviewed by Janet Francis

*C 1-4 FI PT PB*

Being neither hippie nor yuppie, I find it hard to appreciate a Christmas sky full of soulful-eyed cows; and their arrival and purpose couched in the rhythm and similitude of Clement Moore’s "Visit From Saint Nicholas" only compounds the malaise. However, Daniel Lane has caught the essence of the up-and-coming family Christmas Eve with his bright, demandingly realistic illustrations, and Cooper Edens obviously knows the urban scene to create lines like:

Then while all the children the TV were viewing
The sound from the kitchen was purposeful chewing
As Elwood with clamcakes and I with chopped eel
Had just settled down to our microwave meal

The poem seems to end quite abruptly with the dawn of Christmas Day and, whether or not the visual inconsistencies were meant to furnish literary recreations (i.e. puzzles), they do. Where were the "something thrown over their backs" and what happened to the ribbons on their tails in the last picture?

I don’t think Rudolph needs to look for another job yet—but this is a new Christmas book—so stifle memory and enjoy it with some little people who don’t have to. (But don’t forget to let them hear the real one!)

四四四

Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

So much information in so few pages! A map, glossary, list of words and phrases, colored photographs, recipes, and recipe ingredients (in American measurements) combine to underscore the text which explains the evolution of West Germany's food and drink industry, and the everyday preparation and consumption of commercial and family prepared meals. Historical, geographical, and cultural tidbits accent each page, and the text is concise and very easy to read. In addition, the text is sprinkled with German words and terms.

A list of reference works and an index are included. The recipes are easy to follow and step-by-step illustrations will help the adventurous chef. Photographs are accompanied by explanatory text. This book is from the series Food and Drink.

---


Reviewed by Janet Francis

There was a time when the only poems that came with pictures were nursery rhymes. For better or for worse, that is no longer true. In this case, it is definitely for better. The solidly satisfying, colored illustrations of Eric Beddows create visual images of the word image poems; and if the reader doesn’t get one (at first) he will surely get the other!

Esbensen touches poetically on discoveries as diverse as homework and a geode, each explored with perceptive fingers of language, shaping and containing. If ever a young reader will learn that poetry is merely talking about things to be noticed and remembered, he will learn it from poems like these.

*Who Shrank My Grandmother's House* is a delightful book for early-on poetry exposure.

---
Russell Freedman has uncovered another treasure in the archives. This time, it is not photographs from the past, but rather the combined efforts of a Swiss painter (Karl Bodmer) and a German prince (Alexander Philipp Maxmillian) to describe, in both pictures and journal writing, the winter (1833-34) that the two spent with the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians in North Dakota. Because these Indians were practically destroyed by a smallpox epidemic in 1837, and by the slaughter of buffalo herds in the 1860's, their way of life has vanished completely. This account, rediscovered after World War II, is considered by scholars to be the most reliable eyewitness account of the Mandan and Hidatsa cultures. Freedman has made it available to young people.

Freedman's book is well organized with a map at the beginning to show the route taken by Bodmer, Maxmillian, and Maxmillian’s manservant, David Dreiboppel—who also just happened to be an expert hunter and taxidermist. There is an index, a short bibliography, a list of Bodmer’s illustrations, and a list of places to visit for those who wish to stand on the actual sites of this "Indian Winter." Freedman also adds an afterword describing briefly what happened to Bodmer and Prince Maxmillian. I was intrigued to read that after all the portraits Bodmer painted of Indians during that winter, he never again painted an Indian subject.

Freedman’s intent was to make this account accessible to an audience of young readers and, in my estimation, he succeeded. I loved the description of the prince by a young fur company clerk.

He was a man of medium height, rather slender, sans teeth, passionately fond of his pipe, unostentatious, and speaking very broken English. His favorite dress was a white slouch hat, a black velvet coat, rather rusty from long service, and probably the greasiest pair of trousers that ever encased princely legs.

I always wonder what people look like and that description answers my question very well. I’ll bet those pants smelled as greasy as they looked, but then, so did everybody else so they would not be a problem.

Freedman gives us Maxmillian’s observations, too, so we get a feel for his personality through his description. The first is of a near accident on a river boat.
Early in the morning a large branch of a tree, lying in the water, forced its way into the cabin, carried away part of the door, and then broke off and was left on the floor. . . . One might have been crushed in bed.

Maxmilian always sounds matter of fact and understated, but he plainly disapproved of the amount of alcohol given to Indians noting that drunk Indians "became exceedingly affectionate, shaking hands without end and even embracing and kissing us heartily." He adds that "the example which the whites gave the Indians was not very creditable to them."

Freedman has made it possible for young people to have access to a first hand source of information (both verbal and visual) about the traditions and individual personalities of leaders of the Mandans in 1833. This account gives the reader a very personal look at a way of life that is an important part of American history.

———


A 4+ NF

Reviewed by Susan Bromman

*Natural Wonders and Disasters* is a basic introduction to the most amazing and powerful workings of the natural world. The book is split into three sections: Earth, covering earthquakes, mountains, and volcanoes; Water, including oceans, tsunamis, lakes, and floods; and Air, encompassing hurricanes, cyclones, tornados, and droughts. Each phenomena is simply and thoroughly explained and illustrated. The color photographs are from all over the world and complement the text. Captioned pictures bring the reading level down for younger children as well as give clear visual explanations of the phenomena discussed.

The text is very informative, presenting the information in a clear and forthright manner. The devastation of the natural disasters is not glossed over, nor is it sensationalized, but rather presented to the reader as evidence of the power of the earth. A section of books "for further reading" is given, but not a bibliography of the research done by the author. The book also incudes an index. In addition to being interesting reading, this book could be used in lieu of an encyclopedia article to satisfy a curious mind.

———

Reviewed by Lillian Heil

*Whalesinger* brings together two young people with problems: seventeen-year-old Nick who is angry about his brother’s death by a bomb (supposedly set by anti-environmentalists on a boat owned by Ray Pembroke, an environmental activist); and sixteen-year-old Marty who is shy and intuitive. Marty has a learning disability which prevents her from doing well in school, but she learns that she can communicate with whales. Together the young people attempt to uncover Ray Pembroke’s scheme to use a conservation project as a front for plundering Francis Drake’s sunken frigate.

Katz is a good story teller, and the complicated plot and character development is well done. However, I found a major flaw in the events, distracting from the logic and confusing the relationship between the two young people. That was the love scene between Marty and Nick. It wasn’t graphic except for Marty’s comment that Nick must do this with every girl he meets because he carries “those things” in his wallet. That comment told the reader the young people had done more than petting. Looking back over the events, the sex scene didn’t fit for several reasons. The action implied that Nick was angry at the world, looking for revenge and his anger spilled over on to her for endangering her life by swimming at night with the whales. He was angrily telling her the whales were only animals and physically shaking her when he became sexually aroused so his love making started as a form of violence and anger. Added to that set of circumstances the writer would have us believe that the seventeen year old stopped in the midst of his passion to put a condom on. (Maybe that was the author’s way of telling teenagers to engage in safe sex). But the biggest obstacle of this scene was the suspicion it introduced into the relationship between the young people. The girl was left with mixed feelings of excitement, betrayal and guilt. The boy was left knowing he had taken advantage of her innocence. He tried to explain that it was different with her than with the kind of girls who expect this of you. Not a very convincing argument! He could certainly say that to all the other girls, too. The love scene muddles up an exciting partly fantastic story of personal relationships, revenge, victims and victimizers, both past and present. It was a let down to be confused just before the earthquake, life and death climax of the story by an event that didn’t seem to help the forward tension of the story or the building of the relationship between the two young people. Nick could have come to terms with his anger and Marty with her self confidence much more convincingly without the sex scene.
I wish the whole book had fulfilled the expectations I developed as I was caught up in the excitement of this story dealing with important human feelings and their resolution.


Reviewed by Donna Jorgensen

Tod Golightly leaves home in 1730 at a very young age. His family has been robbers for a long time and he determines to be a toby man, which is a highwayman. Along the road he meets a donkey, a dog and a weasel who join him in his quest. They also meet a parson who helps them when Tod lands in jail. Tod’s life is turned in another direction as all four join the parson’s family.

This is a charming small book which includes a list of "Some old words used in this story" right after the table of contents. The story introduces us to 14 or so old words out of use today and also to a way of life that has passed away. Dick King-Smith always does a good job. This is no exception.


Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Abby, Joel and Damaris stayed with Uncle George after Mama died, but now that his business had failed, there was no one left but Papa and he lived four days away by train, in California. Abby had never been on a trip and it was a long time since anyone had seen Papa. He said he was getting married again and they should come to stay.

Mrs. Benton and her three-year-old Buster chaperoned and together they made friends with Miss Eleanor and her domineering father, the Colonel. Friends, that is, until Buster shot the Colonel in the seat of the pants. The rest of the trip was as much of an adventure, and when they did arrive at their destination, things were not as well arranged as they had thought.

Abby’s life held more prospects for the future than she could have imagined before leaving Kansas. She made the most of the prospects in 1905. The story is interesting, humorous and full of growth.

A Pre PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

There are at least three books in this delightful series, called *Peek-A-Boo Flap Books.* The other two are called: "Bye-Bye, Baby" (0-590-45172-3) and "Uh Oh, Baby" (0-590-4571-5). And although they may not be the most appropriate books to purchase for a library they will be loved into non-existence. Toddlers will rediscover their everyday world as they travel with these babies into the world of making messes, coming and going, and playing hide-and-go-seek. Each page has a flap that the child must lift to finish the sequence of events. And therein lies the problem, the flaps probably will not last long and there seems to be no way to attach them more securely, but every once in a while librarians should be allowed to make totally unbelievable purchasing decisions with the delight of children in mind.

★★★★

Taken from *Mice Are Mice.* Copyright © 1990 by Nancy Larrick and Ed Young. Reprinted by permission from Philomel Books, a division of The Putnam & Grosset Book Group.
Helen and her dog Martha are dressed for Halloween as a witch and her cat. They go out for trick-or-treating and see a lady in a purple coat drop a coupon for a free broom. Helen follows to return the coupon and comes to a dark door in a dark alley which turns out to be a witches' supermarket. No dogs are allowed but fortunately Martha has on her cat costume. Brightly colored illustrations show us an unusual produce section with wormy apples, giant black henbane, poison sumac and goatweed while the meat section includes baby brown bats, eels heels, lizard gizzards, and shake 'n bake snake. Helen eventually realized where she is and wants to leave but the dog gets loose and chases cats. The witches chase Helen but she escapes on a flying broom. They can't find her because the witch costumes are "too popular this year."


Sonia and her cat Barnie were best friends; they did everything together. But one day Barnie disappeared and Sonia couldn't find him. When Sonia's dad tells her Barnie was killed in an accident, she has a difficult time accepting it. She even leaves milk and cookies out for him, "just in case." (I loved the sad moon on that page.) The next afternoon Sonia's family has a funeral for Barnie and invites the neighbors and Sonia's best friends. A few weeks later, Sonia's parents get her a new kitten. Sonia loves Daisy, but still remembers Barnie by not letting Daisy play on Barnie's grave.

This would be an excellent book to read to a child who has recently lost a pet, or for a second-grader to read to himself. The book follows the grieving process of not accepting, being sad, accepting, and remembering the good times. The charming illustrations add just the right touch to the story.

☆☆☆☆☆
A wise King realizes how dangerous his arrogant son will be as a ruler, so on his death bed he gives the Prince this blessing: "... you will not wear my crown until the day you marry a woman who is your equal in beauty and intelligence and wealth." His councilors search the world for such a bride, realizing that the self-consumed Prince Raphael likely will never see his equal in any person. During the search for the true bride, the farm girl Rosamund is sent into the mountains to hide her father's goats from the Prince's tax collectors. In the mountains Rosamund meets and befriends a wolf, who gives her a magic circlet and instructs her to go to Prince Raphael, for she is the bride the councilors seek. It is she who can save the land. Indeed, Raphael is captivated by Rosamund, who passes each of his tests of equality. In fact, she proves her self superior to the Prince, and therefore, because she is technically not his equal, Rosamund says she cannot marry him. Raphael is furious and is determined to have Rosamund. She tells him that their marriage may be possible if he will follow her instructions: go to the mountains, find a goatherd's shack, and for one year watch over the goats. Of course, Raphael also meets the wolf, who helps him learn to work with his hands and gain humility. When he returns, he thinks himself unworthy of Rosamund, but she sees how the Prince has changed. They are married and rule happily and wisely for many, many years. But every winter, it is said, Rosamund and Raphael visit a strange friend in the faraway mountains.

Paterson spins a modern fairy tale rich with all the accoutrements of traditional stories. The story was inspired by her visit to Russia where she met Vladimir Vagin. She wrote *The King's Equal* specifically for him to illustrate. Indeed, Vagin's illustrations are lavish, each creating a scene within a scene by boxing a smaller, more focused painting and placing it in the center of a landscape representing a broader but related viewpoint.

Paterson dedicates this story to "my friends East and West who have shared their passion for peace . . ." *The King's Equal* is certainly a story about peace, perhaps encapsulated by Rosamund's words to the wolf, who is about to eat one of her goats: "Isn't it better for us to share the last that we have and die as friends than to tear each other apart and die as enemies?"
24 Brigham Young University


Reviewed by Susan Broman

Five rowdy, bad boys romp through this variant of *Stone Soup* looking for something to eat. They meet up with Billy Q, who not only feeds them burgoo stew, but teaches them a little kindness in the process.

The story has the natural rhythms and repeating motifs that make it good for reading aloud. As each boy runs home to ask his mother for the one ingredient that she has, "though not much of anything else," he remembers to ask with kindness—the message is apparent though not obnoxiously obvious. The language is descriptive and lively and moves the story along. The ink and watercolor illustrations match the rural, folksy tone of the story. This is the first book from both the author (who is a librarian in Los Angeles county) and the illustrator; we look forward to more from each.

★★★★★


Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

Emma Edmonds, a young Canadian woman, enlisted in the Union Army disguised as a man: Franklin Thompson. (See also the review in this issue of *Frank Thompson: Her Civil War Story*, by Bryna Stevens.) No explanation is given as to why she did this, but because she was so slight in build, she was originally assigned to be a nurse. Later, she had the dangerous assignment to be a mail carrier, and eventually, she volunteered to be a spy. She adapted many different disguises—from slave to Irish washerwoman—risking her life over and over again to gain information valuable to the Union cause. Eventually, Emma became so ill that she knew she would have to be hospitalized. Fearing that her true identity would be discovered, she left the army (A.W.O.L.) and returned to her former life.

This version makes for lighter reading than the Stevens version, but it is also more confusing. Reit bounces back and forth between the female character (Emma) and the male character (Frank Thompson) with no degree of consistency sometimes referring to "she" and sometimes to "he." However, it is worth reading if *Frank Thompson: Her Civil War Story* is not available.

★★★★★

A Pre-3 PB 

Reviewed by Donna Jorgensen

Elizabeth (an old lady) and Larry (an alligator) are living in Florida where Elizabeth likes to spend her days in the swamp and Larry likes to spend his days at the golf course. One day Elizabeth brings home Ed, a swamp creature who says he will lose his home to development. Elizabeth has asked him to live with them because she thinks he will be a good friend for Larry. Larry, though he is polite, is not happy with Ed there. He makes messes and wears Larry’s pajamas and sleeps in Larry’s bed. Worst of all, Larry has to take Ed to the golf course with him. Fortunately, Ed’s mother comes looking for him and explains that the swamp creatures are being taken to a new home in the swamp and all returns to normal.

The kids seem to love Elizabeth and Larry when we read them during library time. There are very subtle moral teachings in the stories about accepting those who are somewhat different and what it means to be a friend. The illustrations are brightly colored, humorous and delightful. If you enjoyed *Elizabeth and Larry* you will want to read *Elizabeth, Larry and Ed.*


B 2-4 NF BI 

Reviewed by Lynn Lonsdale

This clearly written and accurate biography of Sojourner Truth is part of the Gateway Civil Rights series. Shumate succeeds beautifully in telling a concise, yet detailed and quickly moving story of a woman who escaped to freedom, and then dedicated her life to achieving equality for blacks and women. Young readers will sense the courage, drive, and talent of a former slave who inspired many people, and "helped plant the seeds of equal rights for all."

A well designed cover features a 19th century painting, and a photo of Sojourner Truth. The easy to read font, and a narrative that honestly portrays both positive and negative aspects of her life will catch and hold the attention of students interested in African-American history, Abolitionists, and important American women. Illustrated with many historical photos and reproductions, the book is free from value judgments. The text includes supplementary, full-page tie-ins on related topics such as "The Early Women’s Movement," and
Frederick Douglas. The book is indexed and includes an appendix of important dates in the life of Sojourner Truth and a list of other recommended titles.


A- 8+ FI

Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

Frank Thompson was really Emma Edmonds, a young Canadian woman who enlisted in the Union Army disguised as a man: Franklin Thompson. (See also the review in this issue, *Behind Rebel Lines: The Incredible Story of Emma Edmonds, Civil War Spy*, by Seymour Reit.) While these two books are about the adventures of Emma Edmonds, this rendition has much more substance. Stevens has quoted extensively from *Nurse and Spy*, the book that Emma Edmonds later wrote. This story also encompasses her earlier and later life. It seems that the reason Emma undertook such an adventure was because of her father who wanted her to "marry a man she didn’t love and never could, a man much older than herself." *Behind Rebel Lines* focuses more on the spying adventures. This version also contains pictures of Emma Edmonds, both during her Civil War experiences and later in her life, many of the woodcuts from the
original *Nurse and Spy*, a map of the territory where Emma served during the Civil War, and a list of other "Sources" for the reader who would like to read more about it.


NR 2-5 FI

Reviewed by Sarah Benson

Stewig's retelling of the traditional French folktale has a peasant girl named Grethel as the main character instead of the soldier. All the other traditional elements are still part of this adaptation: a traveler asking villagers for food, the stinginess, the clever traveler convincing the villagers to help out with the soup made from a magic stone.

The illustrations are warm earth tones in a combination of pen and ink over acrylic oils. The pictures reflect the rural setting of the story, and in several places reflect humor as well. The halo above a woman's head as she explains why she can't help Grethel is humorous in its dichotomy! However, despite the "earthiness" of the illustrations, the faces and human figures are rather flat.

The vocabulary, which uses word such as stingy, "put on long faces," livestock, nudged, and others may be difficult for some young readers. However, with a little help, these words may broaden the vocabulary and provide an added interest in the story.

Even though Grethel manages to obtain food for herself and her mother, there is a sense of obvious manipulation and con-artistry. For example, as the community soup pot beings to fill up, the flat drawings on people's faces makes it difficult to tell if anyone is happy about contributing or not!

Grethel is delighted at having found a very simple way to keep food on the table for herself and her mother—at the expense of others. The redeeming values of the villagers uniting for a great feast of food and fellowship does not rid the reader of wondering if the end justifies the means.


A 2-6 FI

Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Do you remember Pauline, Petrova and Posy? Do you remember the fossil household, including Miss Sylvia, the redoubtable Nana, and the missing—but
omnipresent—Gum (Great Uncle Matthew)? If you do, then you will be delighted to hear that Noel Streatfeild's classic children's story, Ballet Shoes, has been republished in a beautiful new hardback edition with full page black-and-white illustrations by Diane Goode (When I Was Young in the Mountains). The pages and print are large, and the paper is heavy and smooth. It is a lovely book.

When Great Uncle Matthew travels, he picks up fossils and sends them home for his great-niece Sylvia to store in his large old house. All goes well, with only a modicum of grumbling, until he begins sending babies. The first, Pauline, is rescued from a sinking ship. The second, Petrova, is the child of a dying Russian. and the third, Posy, arrives with a tiny pair of ballet slippers from a mother who is a dancer and has no time for a baby. To make ends meet, Sylvia first takes in boarders. Later, she also enrolls the girls in the Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training, in the hopes that they will eventually be able to work and help out.

The rest of the story revolves around the girls' hard work and activities, mostly connected with the school. As they grow, they each take a different path—Pauline with acting, Petrova with airplanes, and Posy as a dancer. But the story is really about how they work hard—mostly out of love for each other.

This is a tried and true story, beloved by little girls since 1937. It moves quickly without great detail, and gives a fascinating glimpse into the world of child performers. It tells about things being difficult, but never allows the reader to feel anything but admiration for the grit and determination of the family that does what must be done for the best good of all. I strongly recommend this beautiful book to little girls from ages 7 to 12.


This is a very well written historical fiction book for younger readers about the Statue of Liberty. Lily is upset because she doesn't have any money to donate for the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty, so she decides to make crowns just like the Statue wears, sell them, and donate the money to the pedestal fund.

This book contains a lot of information about the Statue of Liberty. Children will enjoy making the crowns from the directions included in the back. Lily will show children that they too can use their creativity to earn money.

B 5+ FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Even though this story is fiction it is based on historical fact. After the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish, a river of gold flowed from the new world to the old. The Spanish, greedy for gold to send back to Spain, often overloaded the ships which consequently sank. So many sank that a "crew" of natives was required to rescue the lost gold. The Spanish were often cruel to the natives and didn't care if the divers lived or died. The diving bell's first use was recorded as having enabled the divers to stay under water longer and bring back up more gold. It also saved the lives of many of the divers. Culca, a small native girl, in a desperate attempt to save her brother from death begs the Spanish to let her try to dive with a bell. Of course, they are willing—what have they got to lose?

I rated the book low because I disliked the short, choppy sentences. I also thought that some of the ideas were completely far-fetched. Although someone obviously came up with the idea of this way to get air to the divers, the story in this book really reaches for a solution.

---


NR 9+ FI Reviewed by Marilyn Bailey

Henry Marr and Jonathan Nafiche are best friends; that is, until David comes to live with Jonathan's family. Henry's family is from New England, and Jonathan's is Jewish. Despite their differences, these two boys get along well together until David comes along. David is thought to be Jon's mother's nephew, who was found in Bavaria after World War II. He is very good-looking and intelligent, but has serious emotional problems because of the conditions he had to live in. David becomes a wedge in Henry and Jonathan's friendship. Jonathan begins to spend all his time with David and Henry feels left out. Gradually Henry finds out that David is suicidal and cannot be left alone. David seems to be trying to destroy Jonathan even as he has been destroyed, so Henry tries to stay between them to save his friend. Even after David kills himself, the friendship never returns to what it used to be. Jonathan goes with Henry and his mother to Henry's grandmother's home to get him away from his own home and problems, but both Henry and Jonathan realize
that his problems won’t disappear because of Henry’s grandmother’s anti-Semitic feelings.

I had a hard time trying to decide if this book was worth reading. I think the story, though depressing, needed to be told, although maybe not quite in the manner that was used. I was offended by some of the language, the sexual references, and the common use of abortion. This book definitely would not be for everyone to read.

★★★★


Reviewed by Karen Newmeyer

A mystical night journey on a magical blue horse who eats star jasmine bouquets until morning comes. This must be every child’s dream, to sleep on a magic night horse among the stars, only to find themselves back in bed in the morning. The illustrations have a dream like quality to them. The narrator of the story, a little girl, is shown asleep on horse back and at one point in the story, encounters other horses carrying sleeping children.

★★★★


Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Looking for an escape from feelings of inadequacy, and possibly from her husband, Rose takes her two children and journeys to the coastal area of Norfolk, England where they find and become drawn to a desolate, dilapidated cottage. The children set out to persuade their mother to forget the rest of their vacation plans and try to rent this cottage, anticipating an adventure. And to their everlasting surprise and regret she agrees. They slowly discover no one has set foot in the cottage in seven years. Something menacing has kept the residents of a nearby village from even stealing the valuables that are lying about, unprotected, in the cottage. The identity of the former owner—Yaxley—is revealed, with hints that he was a practicing witch, and the fact that one day he just walked away from the house never to be seen or heard from again. Mysteriously a cat—Yaxley’s cat—appears in the yard, and just as mysteriously it vanishes when the ghost of its master is revenged.
Although at times some of the characters are developed a little lamely, the story on the whole is intriguing. The plot appears to be predictable, but near the end swings in a totally different direction, and the reader is pleasantly surprised that Rose does have some backbone after all.


Hans Wilhelm, himself a son of Bremen, travels the most famous of all literary journeys with his own delightful band of ragamuffins. The author/illustrator remains close to the old German version as he retells the journey of the four animal friends that set out to stun the world with their musical ability. The illustrations are soft and almost delicate, yet the way they portray the different animals shows the strength that each of these possesses.

Like other stories of this wonderful illustrator, this requires attention. And while you’re looking, untangle the mystery of the identity of the robbers in the illustrations.


A stranger comes to an English mining town. The mine has recently been closed down, and many people are struggling to make ends meet. Jules and his friends are wishing for changes, but when they start coming—out of the blue and source unseen—Jules gets suspicious. He is uncomfortable with the way the stranger is taking over the town, and making everyone think their lives are getting better. Then bad things start happening, and when Jules’ little sister disappears, he knows he has to do something about this evil stranger.

This book can be read on several levels. It can be taken at face value as a scary, supernatural story. It may be viewed as an allegory of life and greed and what they can do to the human spirit. It might also be seen as a story of evil personified in a personage who fulfills wishes, then exacts a terrible price. I felt the book had many merits, but moved rather slowly and the ending seemed a bit contrived.

Reviewed by Lillian Heil

Yep has written the Chinese version of the three musketeers, consisting of Shimmer, a dragon princess; Indigo, a servant girl; and the narrator, a monkey wizard. Their quest is to rescue the magic caldron (with the boy Thorn imprisoned in it) so that the inland sea, home of the dragons, can be restored (the water is in the magic caldron). Their enemy is a creature called the Boneless King (and Shimmer’s traitor brother—a dragon called Pomfret) who wants to enslave the world.

As in the three musketeers, the characterizations, breezy interaction between the three heroes and fast paced action make this adventure tale. The dragon is slightly stuffy but determined, the monkey is an irrepressible rascal and the girl is a wary, prickly human who is suspicious of everyone. Together they elude, endure and outdo all the magic the Boneless King can throw at them.

One of Yep’s strengths is the nonstop action as the three go from being imprisoned in a cave to disguising themselves as horses, as sailors, as fleas, escaping, fighting with dragons and one and on—one narrow escape after the other. The reader feels breathless all the time especially when the war is all won and the Boneless King steals the magic caldron again! Both the heroes and villains can change themselves into any creature so it’s hard to know how either one can keep their side straight.

Yep’s dialogue, however is what gives the unique flavor to the characters. I especially enjoyed the impish monkey who is never fazed by the circumstances.

Puckering up, I blew a glowing kiss at her (Shimmer). "We’ve made our own luck—between your brawn, Indigo’s brain and" I wiggled my eyebrows—"my beauty."

Shimmer dodged the kiss. "It’s impossible to hold a serious conversation with you."

When the monkey saves Shimmer, she tries to thank him.

She glanced at me uncomfortably and then croaked like a frog. Embarrassed, she swallowed and managed to whisper a hoarse "Thank you"
His reply is typical.

"Here you are with little chance to answer back and I'm too out of breath to insult you."

It is a dramatic moment when the suspicious Indigo finally admits her affection for Shimmer when the dragon is trying to send her away.

Indigo raised a face that was a mask of misery. "I said . . ." she sobbed, "I love you."

Shimmer's paw shot away as if Indigo had suddenly turned into a red-hot coal; the dragon looked . . . well . . . frightened. "Me? With my temper?"

Indigo threw herself at Shimmer's foreleg. "You're the only thing I've ever loved."

That scene is the final cement to the relationship between this team of three Chinese musketeers.

All in all I found Yep's dragon tale to have nonstop excitement and great characterizations of an unusual threesome.