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Book Reviews

Authors
Blaine Hall, Lillian Heil, James Jacobs, Eric Fisher, Thom Hinckley, Janet Francis, Tim Wadham, Afton Miner, and Elizabeth Wahlquist

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Reviews


When your older twin brothers torment you, your father—when he's not off on some business trip—doesn't understand you, and your harried working mother seems too powerless to help, especially since her futile attempts only make the tormenting worse, life can be hard. But locked all day in the bathroom by his brothers with nothing to do but look out the window, Todd sees in the river bordering the back lawn an island twenty-feet offshore. It's really only a sandbar a few feet high with some grass and a sapling growing on it, but to Todd it promises a place of his own where no one can get at him—a refuge. Unfortunately, he tells Louie LaVoy, the girl next door and the closest thing to a friend he's found since moving to Schenectady a few months before.

Starved for affection and attention from her neglectful father, she sees it as a chance to organize a club (of which she'll naturally be president), plant a flag, build a fort—all to be written up with photographs in the newspaper. Futilely asserting his ownership (he registers his claim at the city offices), Todd sees his sanctuary being overrun and his control over his island slipping. The final blow to his plans for solitude comes when Louie enlists the help of his older brother and their obnoxious friend to help life the heavy railroad ties into a fort, and they take over to build a clubhouse.

But out of it all, Todd gains something even more valuable than a refuge from the world. Is it his brothers or is it Todd who is changed by the experience? Adler has created for upper grade children a warm insight into the often difficult family and peer relationships of children struggling to grow up.—Blaine Hall.


*The Shell Lady's Daughter* gives the reader a history of mental illness. The story begins just before Kelly's mother has a nervous breakdown. Kelly is sent to Palm Beach to live with a strong, outspoken grandmother who has always disapproved of the woman her son had married. The rest of the book tells how Kelly adjusted to her mother's illness and to her obstinate grandmother. Kelly's flashback memories of mother are juxtaposed to and triggered by stormy sessions with her domineering grandmother and her comfortable friendship with Evan, a young lawyer confined by polio to a wheelchair. Kelly learns to appreciate her grandmother, to understand her mother's plight and, from Evan, a way to give warmth and love to her mother when she needs it.
The "Shell Lady Stories" told by her mother provide allegorical bridges of understanding for Kelly and the reader as both realize the lonely unhappiness of the little girl who became Kelly's mother but who hadn't yet grown up to be a woman. In deciding to help her mother, fourteen-year-old Kelly may have chosen a task beyond her years but she had the insight and the help of friends and relatives to make a valiant attempt.--Lillian Heil Adler, David A. Bunny Rabbit Rebus. Thomas Y. Crowell, 1983. ISBN 0-690-04197-7. LC 82-45574. $7.89. 38p.

Little Rabbit is hungry, but the pantry is empty. Mother Rabbit asks Sleepy, a neighbor, if he will give Mother Rabbit vegetables for her son in a trade for feathers for his pillow. Duck offers feathers, but needs a container to collect rainwater. Hen has a barrel, but lacks straw for her broom, which mouse finally provides without needing anything in return. The appeal of this small book lies more in the method of telling than the story itself. The entire tale is a rebus, with pictures instead of text providing many of the words. A few of the symbols are difficult to decode (rabbit's leg plus a "d" become a "need;" closer examination indicates that the knee on the leg was outlined in black), but a glossary lists each picture in the story with its written translation. The pictures are in the order of appearance used in the story, making them easy to find. Additional helps are an introduction to rebus reading at the beginning, and the complete tale written out at the end.

Thoroughly and nicely done.--James Jacobs.


Felix, a thirteen-year-old traveling alone from England to his native Spain, shipwrecks just off the coast of southern France. Ashore in good shape, Felix is given a premonition to leave the beach and move back into the forest where he has a "vision" of hanging. Frightened, he slips, hits his head, and loses consciousness. When he comes to, he finds he has been amnesiac for months in care of monks. He can remember little of his former life, and though his memory slowly returns, he remains unable to recall the shipwreck or vision. Then, one morning he goes to the seashore and remembers the vision just in time to witness it again, this time in reality. Felix rescues the hanging figure, a young Spaniard, Juan. Then the trouble really begins, for Juan tells Felix that the head monk, Father Vespasian, is the leader of the gang of robbers who had planned his death. Felix and
Juan run, hoping to return to their families, but the robbers pursue them over the Alps into Spain. There, in a supernatural confrontation, Felix and Juan face the robbers.

Because of its authentic 19th century European flavor, the book seems to be historical fiction, but it is a fantasy. The excellent research showing the culture of southern France and Spain sometimes overpowers the other elements of the story, but it is interesting enough to be a strength instead of a detriment. The characters are well developed and the fantastic plot elements tastefully handled. Recommended for all readers.--Eric Fisher.


In this final book of the Westmark trilogy (Westmark and The Kestrel the first two), Alexander sews up all the loose threads remaining in this intricate tale of political manipulations, influence peddling, warfare, and a young man's struggle to be honorable in a time of turmoil.

In Westmark, the usurper of the throne has been banished, the war with neighboring Regia won, and the country left unified. Three war heroes are now leaders in Westmark's government, but their different points of view hinder the country's healing—particularly when the once-banished usurper returns with armies and assumes power.

Alexander manages to orchestrate his complex plot cleanly, keep tabs on the wave of compelling characters who swarm through the story, and relate the happenings in fresh, clean language. All is resolved satisfyingly, but not without skipped heartbeats as well-laid plans go amiss to the very end.

Perhaps the reader's greatest reward, however, is not the suspense and the action, but the small stories of believable characters who struggle to find the right way through a monstrous tangle of ideals, duties, temptations, and an emotional landscape which never stops changing.--James Jacobs.


Nadia The Willful is a folktale-like story of a hot-tempered Bedouin girl who can only be comforted by Hamed, a beloved older brother. When the brother does not return from a quest to find new grazing ground for the sheep, both Nadia and her father Tarik are inconsolable. Tarik decrees that no one should ever mention the son's name again, but Nadia soon discovers that everything reminds her of Hamed and talking about him eases the pain of loss.
Her newfound peace pushes her to disobey her father and share memories of her brother with everyone in the oasis. Afraid of her words at first, gradually others begin to share their own stories of Hamed except for Nadia's mother, who fears that the bitter sorrow of her husband will be turned against her daughter.

A shepherd boy is the first one to accidentally use Hamed's name in Tarik's presence; despite Nadia's protest, he is banished and then people are afraid to listen to Nadia. When she doesn't talk of Hamed, Nadia loses her inner peace because she can no longer recall his face and voice. Willful Nadia storms at her father with two questions: Can you recall Hamed's face? Can you still hear his voice? When he admits he cannot, Nadia gently tells him her discovery--Hamed can live in their memories.

Alexander evokes the feeling of the vastness of the desert with phrases like "in the land of the drifting sands," "before the pillars of wind that stirred the sand," "before the sun sets and the moon casts its first shadow on the sand." Her brief characterizations are always vivid of willful Nadia who "screamed, wept and stamped the sand," when she was crossed, and her father whose sadness brought "hardness to his face and coldness in his eyes." Sue Alexander's black-and-white illustrations capture the feel of starlit skies, empty desert sands, curved dunes, bold designs in Bedouin tents and precious shade from the oasis palms. The book conveys both the uniqueness of a desert people and the universal human need for memories to keep the past alive.--Lillian Heil.


If you've ever had a flannel shirt, you'll appreciate their ability to shrink--but Anderson's purple-and-yellow striped shirt has more than the usual amount of this ability. As the shirt becomes smaller with each "sousing, dousing and rinsing," it is handed from Mr. Elbert to his wife, to her daughter Janie, and finally to Baby Wilbur. The baby's 2 day tantrum turned the shirt into a security blanket instead of being doomed to the ragbag.

Because the illustrations are black-and-white except for the bright yellow and purple shirt (and occasional echoes of yellow or purple on a brooch, cat's eyes, or baby's lace collar,) the focus is always on that marvelous shirt as it progresses from owner to owner.

The language is pleasantly repetitious with each wearer of the shirt being told, "My, that is a fine shirt," each wearer liking it...
so much that it is worn several times before the fateful washings, and each owner not being able to "bear to throw it out."

It doesn't make the reader wish for the "good old days" but it certainly gives Anderson an opportunity to capitalize on a humorous situation of days gone by.--Lillian Heil.


Anyone interested in rabbits will find Colleen Bare's Rabbits and Hares informative reading. Distinguishing between rabbits, both wild and domestic, and hares, she discusses their history; their role in superstition, myth, and literature; their life cycles; their eating and mating habits; the care of their young; their methods of evading or escaping predators; their scientific classifications; the characteristics of the various domestic and wild breeds; rabbit raising, and their contributions to man. Bare's own black-and-white photographs illustrate and clarify many of the interesting characteristics of these most ancient of all mammals of America and Europe.--Blaine Hall.


The mice of Brambly Hedge will have an enduring place in children's stories because of their charm and because of the ravishing beauty of their world. Not only do we capture the timeless ritual of the Midwinter Feast, but we see also the Old Oak Palace drawn in a way that the great buildings of England have not been drawn for a century and a half.

Primrose and Wilfred need a place to practice their Midwinter Eve recitation and in looking, find the secret staircase. The children whom I know who received this book for Christmas soon "discovered" their own secret staircase. It is this ability to captivate young and old alike that no doubt accounts for the million copies of Brambly Hedge books that have been sold in a short time. One is given the courage to face our disordered world by the knowledge that there are still those who would lavish five years of their lives on the miniature world of mice.--Thom Hinckley.


What's Left? is a guessing game with the reader. Questions like "What's left after you've eaten your chocolate chip cookie?" are asked on a yellow page. The answer "cookie crumbs" is on the next
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Off to a rather slow start, The Wishing People more than justifies itself once the story is underway. Martha loves a miniature weather house at an auction and receives it as a birthday present along with some astonishing developments when the small man and woman, who show the change of weather, come to life upon Martha's moonlight wish. She receives one wish for each of her ten years of age and they launch her and her friend, Jonathan, through a series of adventures that range from flying (in the process being mistaken for UFO's), to changing places with their pets, to a visit to Mars where they receive a most intriguing welcome.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom (the wooden people) are under an enchanted punishment for their selfishness. To set them free, Martha must sense the unselfish use of one of her own wishes that will allow them to return to their own world --just a little beyond this one.

Bits and pieces of many fantasies are incorporated into Ms. Beachcroft's books: the children's adventure inhabiting their pet's bodies calls to mind Wart's training in The Once and Future King, and other wishes come preciously close to Oz magic and Edith Nesbit. None do violence to the vehicle of the story, however, and the result is an interesting, if not great, venture into the life and times of a dream all children share.--Janet Francis.

Even those who routinely shun poetry will find a quiet appeal in Bodecker's verse. Much of that attraction lies in his clever turn of phrase. A Dane living in New England, Bodecker has a flair for his second language which is the envy of those born to English. Example: "The lid was off,/ the spoon was in,/ the syrup smelled deliciously;/ I looked, I watched,/ I sniffed,/ and then--/I licked it syrup-ticiously." Other poems in this widely varied collection describe animals (including the untrustworthy teeth revealed in crocodile's "crocosmile"), give courage to those living in freezing Februaries, mourn the difficulty of being good, and comment upon a potpourri of daily discoveries. The poet's line drawings add just the right touch of visual whimsy to his verbal play. A delight.--James Jacobs.


As a child I had framed nursery rhyme prints. Butterworth makes me wish for his illustrations framed. I laughed when I saw what the old women who lived in a shoe whips her children with. Just how the farmer's wife cut off the tails captured my fancy. There is sublime subtlety about 'Polly put the kettle on': did Sukey have anything to do with their leaving? But it's the Queen-visiting pussycat who convinces me that nursery rhymes will survive even the twentieth century--and beyond. How I'd love to have that one framed!

All my colleagues will, I trust, 'rag' the editor who made the decision to put more than one rhyme to the page, thus creating some incredible double entendre. Hot crossed buns, indeed!--Thom Hinckley.


Let's Paint a Rainbow and What's for Lunch? are titled play-and-read books. The first shows two painters adding stripes to a rainbow. As the book progresses, a cut away section of the rainbow surprises the reader at the end when he discovers this narrow part is a cat's tail (in colors of the rainbow). Admittedly playful, there doesn't seem to be enough content to keep a child looking for long.

What's for Lunch? has a little more suspense because a monkey on a string goes through a slot in each page looking for food for
lunch until he gets to the one he wants at the end—the bananas.

The books are playful, colorfully illustrated and sturdily constructed out of thick cardboard, but neither one has enough content to merit the subtitle "play-and-read." The reader is attracted by a gimmick, but there is nothing to merit a second look.—Lillian Heil.


The art in this book surpasses almost all the technical illustration done in this country. Those familiar with the most sophisticated aerial reconnaissance cameras will recognize some of the perspectives of these pictures. To take the complex geometry of a compound lens and translate it into a new perspective construction using curved lines is no mean feat. Few since Leonardo have made such systematic experimental use of the play of variables as does Ventura.

Not only is the art superlative, but the text is superb. In a paragraph we are given controversy surrounding carbon-14 dating in a way that a fifth-grader can understand. All the text is not only illuminating but richly packed with interesting information. The genius of this book will be appreciated. This book, for its brilliance and beauty, belongs in every public and school library to fire the imagination of coming generations.—Thom Hinckley.


Language that is worn and unimaginative is labeled 'trite' or 'cliched,' while the best literature is always new, rich, and on the cutting edge of ambiguity. Seldom will you ever experience better use of this than here. Giant Cold: lambent, illuminating strokes. When I reread, 'What does love mean?...' this morning it was different than when I read it last night.

This story will be what you choose to make it. It can be Boy/Father/Mother on holiday: Boy has dream: Last day of holiday, Marvelous! It can be the boy's discovery that the primordial
legends of the past are, in the heart of man the quintessential present. It can be self's conquest of self.

This sounds heavy but this book makes me feel that I have heard my mother tongue for the first time in an eon; it makes me think about the ways I love my sons and the whys.

This book will be many things to many people and all of them will be good. --Thom Hinckley.


"Once upon a time there lived a humble woodsman with his wife and a son named Jack..." Despite its traditional beginning, this European style fairy-tale is uniquely American in spirit. Jack is a piper of dubious fame whose main virtues are his indomitable character and his ability to play the bagpipes poorly. Through a series of unusual incidents, like the accidental turning of "Sir Giles, the Somewhat Impolite" to stone, he inadvertently takes the kingdom and wins the hand of the princess in marriage. She, however, is not entirely satisfied with this arrangement and runs away one evening with a handsome stranger. Unfortunately, she doesn't have Jack's knack for making the best of a situation and finds that this handsome devil really is the devil who captures her and takes her to his dark fortress. Jack goes looking for her and finally finds and frees her. The tone of the story, unlike the greater body of the true European tales, is for the most part tongue-in-cheek, and its wryly humorous pictures are well drawn and apt. The humor is sincerely funny, and I found it refreshing from the beginning (in which Jack's parents are "not entirely displeased" at Jack's leaving home and taking his pipes with him) to the end. Bravo, Mr. Elwell, on a job well done.!--Eric Fisher.


Any family with or without a cat should find A Kitten is Born a perfect way to introduce birth to their young children. The clear, straightforward text and the full-color photographs showing Tabitha in heat, giving birth, licking the kittens clean and dry, nursing them, tenderly caring for them over the first few weeks and the delightful kittens themselves growing, playing, learning toilet training and grooming, and finally being totally independent make this book well deserving of the "Critici in Erba" Merit Award at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. Kitten joins the biologists Fischer-Nagels' four other children's books on the birth and early life of butterflies, honeybees, ladybugs, and puppies.--Blaine Hall.

Lep Nye, 14-year-old doctor's apprentice, was excited when Dr. Peale asked him to accompany him to Philadelphia for herbs and medical supplies. The frightening yellow fever epidemic of 1793 raging in the city (4,000 people died, almost one-tenth of the population), made the trip dangerous, but Lep had perfect faith in Dr. Peale's medicines. Besides, his mother wanted him to find and bring home his sister, Clara, who had gone there to work for Uzziah Botkin to repay an old family debt. But the planned short stay in the city turned into weeks when Dr. Peale decided to stay to help treat the sick. In spite of Lep's fierce faith in the bloodletting, the herbal potions, and the mustard plasters even after Dr. Peale had realized their futility, the disease claimed its victims relentlessly until the fall frosts came.

The story moves rapidly with an air of mystery, but more than the fairly predictable plot, the major interest in the story is the social background—the superstitions, the primitive medical practices, the gullibility, the greed and the chicanery of the citizens taking advantage of the epidemic for personal gain. Even Clara, trusting in Botkin's claims for their efficacy, is found selling useless copper rings coated with tar guaranteed to ward off the dreaded fever. Readers interested in historical fiction will find this book enjoyable.—Blaine Hall.


Binky is a six-year-old reckless driver. And while it's funny to see him plow into people's gardens, slosh through fresh cement sidewalks and cause pedestrians to drop their groceries, it's even more fun to see Binky confined to his own yard by his parents and finally lose (literally) his wheels because he collides with a birdhouse pole which collides with the picture window of his very own house. Most of the story is told with dialogue liberally sprinkled with onomatopoeic sounds associated with fast-moving cars such as "var-room-m-m," "yipe," "honk," and "eek!" It's a fast-moving story, both amusing and satisfying.—Lillian Heil.


One never forgets a Garfield novel, for its brilliance is permanently etched on the brain. Garfield is, in fact, the archetypical Victorian novelist. I was therefore unprepared for a Bible picture book by Garfield. Belshazar's feast is told through
the eyes of a small serving-boy named Samuel who is abused by the
gluttonous courtiers throughout the feast, in a way that makes the
story abrasive and distasteful. Then the Prophet Daniel enters.
Everyone leaves save Daniel, Samuel, and Mordecai the cat. And then
in one, blinding flash, another Garfield book is burned onto your
brain. The single statement of Daniel is so filled with prophetic
insight that I shall regard it henceforth as canonical.—Thom
Hinckley.

Garver, Susan and Paula McQuire. Coming to America: From Mexico,
X. LC 81-65504. $11.95. 161p.

Coming to America: From Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico is the
latest entry in a Delacorte series on immigration to America.
Earlier volumes have treated immigration from Asia and Europe.
This new volume, as the title indicates, gives an overview of
Hispanic immigration into the U.S.

Books on the subject of Hispanic immigration is painfully lacking,
and so this volume is quite welcome. It is well done and gives
the reader an idea of the reasons these people immigrate
to the U.S. and the problems of immigration.

A drawback of the volume is the fact that only immigration from
Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico is discussed. Spanish speakers come
to the U.S. from everywhere Spanish is spoken. A more complete
treatment of this vital topic is necessary.—Tim Wadham.


Billie Wind (advised by elders of her tribe to go to the
Everglades until she can hear the animals talk as her ancestors
did) experiences fire, a hurricane, a tidal wave, and animal
wisdom in contrast to human destructiveness. George describes the
wild beauty of the swamp: "As the crooked moon climbed the sky the
next night Billie Wind poled into Big Cypress Swamp. The giant
trees closed behind her like a protective door as she followed a
slow river into the forest." Her writing invites one to fall in
love with Billie's adopted otter, Petang. "She had fed and stroked
him and that, she knew, spelled "mother" to all young mammals.
Presently he folded his paws on his chest as if to say his world
was all right again." Later, a baby panther is added to Billie's
family. "Lifting his head she looked into two round yellow eyes
set in gold-and-black face. Although he was young he already
wore the hallmark of the American panther or mountain lion: black
mask, nose bridge and cheek patches. He was about three months
old, Billie Wind guessed when she saw his baby canine teeth and
cuspids. He spat fiercely for a few minutes, then sniffed her face and licked her chin." Petang adds a gopher turtle "six inches high and marked prettily with tan and brown diamonds and squares."

Billie's adventures are vividly real and often life-threatening but nature as described by George is more solidly dependable, more just and more eternal than man's unthinking destructive grasp for wealth and power. Billie's friendship with the otter, leopard, and turtle achieves a satisfactory resolution as each animal returns to the wilds and Billie returns to her home with the benefit of their wisdom. "At last she understood Charlie Wind. He had sent her on a mission, not a punishment. Spider lilies were lightning bolts and lightning bolts were spider lilies. Albert Einstein had said the same thing in physics, E = mc², but that had been destructive. So it must be said in spider lilies."--Lillian Heil.


"Birds have front feet that are very different from their back feet." What?! Everybody knows that birds have only two feet—or do they? Comparative anatomy is the basis upon which the authors hang some rather fresh and original interpretations that might possibly be a bit confusing for the very young child, who would get a different slant from the encyclopedia. However, it is this originality that catches the reader's attention. Frankly, even your friendly podiatrist might find some fascinating foot facts in this sprightly little treatment. Basically sound, a brisk style and excellent photographs combine to make this "Let's-Read-and-Find-Out" Science Book a must purchase.--Afton Miner.


Whoever heard of true fishermen throwing or rather shoving a gigantic fish back into the water? That's what Tammy did after her gigantic fish looked at her with big soulful, pleading eyes. The end of this story is an amusing twist after Tammy has spent the day pulling in the crayfish and clams while her father and grandfather catch real fish. The Grays' parallel construction ("Father drove. Grandfather told Father how to drive. Tammy rode in the back and watched." or "They went up a hill and down a hill. Over a bridge and under a bridge.") is rhythmically satisfying. The book is illustrated with Joyce's slightly fantastic line drawings that catch just the right whimsical note for this "fish story."--Lillian Heil.

Jim couldn't believe his ears. Was it really possible that Billy, a seventh grade classmate with whom he'd had a fight, would take revenge by giving Jim's dog away to some tourists passing through the Indian Reservation on which they lived? Quick was not only Jim's best friend, but she was a valuable cow dog on his family's ranch. She was also due to have puppies very soon, and Jim was sick with worry. It didn't take long for him to decide to go after her, and he left in such a hurry that he took only the clothes on his back and no money at all. But he felt so sure that he would locate her right away that he wasn't too concerned. Had he but known the distance he would travel and the difficulties he would encounter, he would likely have had second thoughts. But Jim knew how much the family needed and loved Quick. Besides, Jim knew that Quick needed and loved him, and that was enough.

On his slow but successful thousand mile quest for Quick from Whiteriver, Arizona, to Santa Barbara, California, and back, Jim worked for a carnival, encountered an escaped criminal, was picked up by the police, and hitched a ride with at least one suicidal driver. He also earned the right to be called by a very special Indian name, E-dhah, which is used by parents for sons who have acted especially responsible and trustworthy. Middle graders will understand Jim's concern for his dog and will enjoy reading his adventures in this fast-paced and suspenseful junior novel.--Afton Miner.


Eating Ice Cream with a Werewolf is a wonderful find; a genuinely funny book. Brad and Nancy Gowan are left with a babysitter while their parents have a fling in Bermuda. But not just any babysitter. This one considers herself an amateur witch, and she even casts reasonably successful spells. The spell from her second-hand spellbook doesn't cause ice cream to appear in the freezer--a drugstore delivery man brings it later. Of course, the delivery man is not an ordinary delivery man. (Neither is anything else in the book.) Instead, he's a werewolf.

What Phyllis Green has done here, and done very well, is to make the extraordinary seem ordinary. In the process she teaches children to reach their full potential. A book that does this without being didactic is admirable indeed. And Patti Stren's wonderfully creative line drawings complement the text perfectly.--Tim Wadham.

John Denison loved his daughters, Sue, Sharon, and Sandy. However, even when they were little "there had been a foreignness handle." But of his daughters, Sharon was living in a women's commune in California; Sue, who at sixteen had married a man twenty and gone off to Milwaukee, had now come back home with little Brian, her marriage troubled by her unfulfilled need for love; And now Sandy at sixteen was playing around with Lonnie Armentraut, a married man, a drinker and a stepper.

Why couldn't John seem to get along with them? He only wanted to protect them, to help them do what was right, to be respectable. But he was always afraid of losing control. He just didn't know how to handle girls. With little Brian, it was different. He wasn't afraid to wrap his arms around Brian or to smile at him. Yet unaware, he was responding to the "essential tenderness" missing from his own life fifty years before.

To Sandy, her father was unapproachable. When she needed reassurance, something solid to hang on to, someone to touch her, to treat her tenderly, she sensed that if she reached out to him "he'd stiffen, move away from her." Talking with Sue, Sandy suddenly understood how it might feel to be Sue's father: "Did Daddy have the same fear, that we would realize that he had no real control over us? ... Maybe it was that fear that made him so crabby . . ."

and tries to bridge the gap that separates them: "If I snap at Daddy all the time because well, because I feel he doesn't love me enough, then isn't it possible that he snaps at me for the same reason? Maybe he wants something more from me than what he's getting, too."

Resolving such deep-seated family problems is not easy, and it takes a near-tragedy to break down the barriers here, but Hall has created a moving and perceptive story for teenagers and their parents.--Blaine Hall.


Another collection by Hoke with the happy-for-horror set in mind. It is astonishing that the proliferation of collected horrors we have seen in the past two or three years appears without duplicates, but there are evidently never-ending sources for these tales.

Familiar names in the genre appear alongside newer authors in Hoke's groupings, but all maintain the quality of writing that
lifts them beyond the paperbacks the librarian fears need to be reviewed and approved by the library board, or the illustrated comics available in the field. This collection contains such oldies as Algernon Blackwood's "A Case of Eavesdropping," with the sturdy, innocent boarder in the haunted house; and John Wyndham's "More Spinned Against", with Arachne's deadly leave of absence, along with more recent comers such as Diana Burkenshaw with her story of horror on the (well, almost on) the ski slopes. There's always shelf room for one more in this subject area!—Janet Francis.


Timothy and Verity Tibbs live with the Grimbles, who make them dig parsnips in January in the frozen ground for the nasty medicine they sell. Verity has very bad eyesight (has doorknob glasses that are soon broken) and is overly truthful. A ladybug lands on Verity's nose and then flies to Timothy's outstretched finger. When she recites the nursery rhyme

Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home!
Your house is on fire and your children will burn!

he replies, "Skip the wisecrack, angel. I don't keep house and I don't have kids. If you must know I'm a bachelor." It is Lewis O. Ladybug, Private Investigator, who has seen the children's grandparents and been sent to check on them. The grandparents had dropped through a door into the other world. Timothy and Verity want to escape the Grimbles and find their grandparents. Lewis says no, that it wouldn't be wise; but they eventually fall through a door to the other earth. It is ruled by Emperor Raoul and Baroness von Bad Radisch. Raoul forces Dr. Weedblossom to invent something new every day by threatening his family. They now tell him, "Dad, you shouldn't have worried about Mom and me. You should have worried about the whole world." Verity realizes, "That's very hard for a human person to do." The stone owls he had developed out of fog, ice, muck, and polluted water made Raoul's rule possible. He kept his power by covering the Moonflower with a dome so it couldn't grow and blossom.

With all kinds of adventures, escapes, getting caught again, finding new friends, they overthrow Raoul. The Baroness asks, "Destroy our empire? Children, one of them blind, and a bear and a snail and a bug?" They find not only grandparents but parents and a brother. Now they have "no need to live under clouds and in
shadows. Now, you young ones—all of us—can live by the sun and by the moon and by the Moonflower. By a light with a tinge of wonder to it. By a steady, clear, forgiving kind of light." The **Owlstone Crown** may sound ridiculous, but it is charming and farfetched and the characters delightful.—Elizabeth Wahlquist.


Pigs are on the rise judging from the number of delightful books written about them. **Pigs Might Fly** is not another **Charlotte's Web** though there are some similarities. The heroes in both books are runts (called a dag in England), innocent, cheerful, likable pig who try all kinds of things like swimming and, for a few minutes, flying. In this book there are no children to plead for the life of the runt of the litter; the only human of any importance is the Pigman whom the pigs considered their slave because "he did nothing but minister to their wants." This is life seen from the viewpoint of the famous Gloucester Old Spot breed of the pigs at The Resthaven Farms.

King Smith's characterizations are humorously realistic because of his skillful use of dialogue and choice of names. Mrs. Barley-love is Dag's mother; her neighbors are Mrs. Gobblespud and Mrs. Swiller, Mrs. Marzinunch and so on. Isak is the cheerful otter who calls Daggie "old pig" and ends every sentence with a warning similar to, "and don't think it isn't 'cause it is," and is given to silent fits of laughter. There are chuckles all through the book as the author keeps his characters consistent, e.g. the starving Pigman with the huge appetite is offered a duck paste or spam sandwich and has to turn them down for peanut butter because he's just been rescued by a pig and a duck. Readers will enjoy this pig's view of the world.—Lillian Heil.
In Nobody's Orphan, by Anne Lindbergh, Martha, an eleven-year-old girl, discovers that she is not adopted. Despite her brown eyes, she is the daughter of a green-eyed, dog-loving family. She has met a sympathetic, eccentric older couple whose daughter had run away. Martha concludes that her real grandparents and real mother had run away with a dog trainer—probably Martha's real father because she loves dogs so much.

Martha's father was a diplomat, and they moved frequently, often making it hard on Martha. Things were tough at her new school, and it took a long time for her to make a friend. Martha had to borrow nickels from her classmates to pay for an advertisement to locate her real mother. Her various money-raising schemes raised more ruckus than money.

Martha's worst problem concerned Ronald Reagan, a friendly "orphan" Labrador Retriever. She really identified with him, but her father had made it clear that he did not want to find Ronald Reagan in his house when he returned from South America. What to do?

Middle graders will enjoy the crisp, humorous writing and find in Martha a new friend they can understand—Afton Miner.

In The World's Refugees: A Test of Humanity, Gil and Ann Loescher explore the plight of people forced from their homes, part of the 100 million uprooted since World War I. They move among these desperate people, exploring their roots and fates and the causes and effects of their displacement.
community to address the problem on humanitarian grounds. The Bibliography, Directory of Organizations, and Sources of Information on Refugees enable readers to obtain further information or to respond to the "Test of Humanity" in the book's subtitle. A book for young adults and their parents, particularly helpful to those who feel threatened by an influx of refugees into America or to those who want to contribute to refugee relief programs.--Blaine Hall.


There really is a Holland where small walls called dykes keep the water out (and don't sometimes)! Hansy lives there with his three virtuous sisters and the mermaid they find stranded after the big storm. The story of the mermaid's reluctant education and Hansy's compassionate efforts to make her happy, and finally, to send her home, make for an entertaining picture tale. The evocative illustrations almost tell the story without the words, from the self-satisfied Dutch faces to the rippling water over the wind-blown fields. The underwater, fully clothed mermaids are somewhat mind-boggling, but who's to say the concept hasn't been wrong all along--all that bare skin surely would have been subject to chapping!--Janet Francis.


If you thought the farm rooster was responsible for getting the day started, read Polushkin's **Morning** with appropriately crazy illustrations by Bill Morrison. Each animal wakes another with a mouse thrown in for comedy in most of the pictures. (He clings to a cow's horn, races along the fence, laughs at the pandemonium and uses the fishing pole like a tight rope walker.) The kitchen is a mess of fried fish and hungry animals as the boy cheerily calls "Good Morning" to his parents on the last page. Part of the fun is the understated text and slapstick action in the pictures. For example, the text says, "The cat said PRRRR and woke the dog," while the picture shows a dog with a startled look being landed on by a cat flying through an open window with a squirrel clinging to his tail. The mouse is looking on open-mouthed. It's the kind of book that ought to wake you up happy.--Lillian Heil.

A persistent duck named Henry is confronted with all kinds of obstacles—locking his keys in the car, heavy traffic, a bus breakdown—as he tries for 2 1/2 hours to get to his friend Clara's birthday party. Is it all worthwhile? Does Henry make it? To answer would give away the surprise ending but you'll sympathize with Quackenbush's frustrated duck who races through this entire book driving the reader's anticipation with him. Read the book to see what happens, and don't miss the clocks drawn on every page to count down the minutes before five when the party will end.—Lillian Heil.


*Best of Friends* tells how fifteen year old Matt grows up—learns to ignore his father's calculated efforts to make him into a macho athlete, to overcome his paralyzing fear of water and to be independent of his overprotective mother's attempts to shelter him. Matt's dislike for John seems initially justified by the latter's overbearing, insulting manner but when that front crumbles, Matt begins to see John as a frustrated human being. Matt's fear of water is convincingly described and in the middle of a fight with John, Matt's realization that his brother had been the cause of it helps the reader to understand some of the negative feelings that have stood between the two.

And when it came to him, he was so struck by the picture of it that he stopped fighting: the blue sky, the blue water, the look on John's face, then water in his eyes, the sky gone, the silver bubbles, his bubbles rising away from him higher and higher as John pushed him under and held him there, fingers like wire around his arms, on his shoulders."

Andrea acts as a catalyst for Matt to know himself. Her relationship to her blind poet father is fuzzy—she seems to be taking her mother's place as a companion and acting as his eyes and his hostess for parties. Yet, the father's jealousy is not explained and neither is her strange combination of naivety and sophistication. She's been all over the world, but she's not smart enough to avoid giving a dangerous come-on to the roustabouts at the carnival. She talks about a lover in Paris but is afraid of her father's reaction to Matt. This puzzle is echoed by others in Roth's book. Mature models for adult behavior are important to all human beings as they grow up. If parents like Matt's do not furnish a model, then someone else needs to. In this book there are no
adults to turn to; Matt, Andrea, and John have to figure out their goals by themselves. Matt, at least symbolically, is supposed to have found his way free as he dreams of "the bird flying from home."

To resolve his problem Matt needs to do more than realize he has to make decisions for himself. He also needs to understand that other human beings (such as parents) can help and support each other.—Lillian Heil.


My first recommendation in connection with The Last of Danu's Children would be to discard the cover. It appears to have been drawn by a neurotic child. Once past that barrier, don't give up reading for a chapter or two. This is not a fantasy that will catapult the reader into immediate fascination, but it is aptly written, employing several strains of Celtic mythology (which are briefly explained in an Afterword). The standard events are well presented with a struggle to gain the soul of one of the young people involved, and with another who is strongest (and most at risk). The wicked protagonists are interestingly drawn from actual historical characters and almost, we can feel pain at their defeat.

Matt, Anna and Kate experience adventures in the Otherworld and in their own, as time is set out of joint to grant the magician's wishes; and Matt experiences personal tragedy in the loss of his war-correspondent father—possibly as the necessary payment for his near failure in the fantasy world. Not breath-taking, but above run-of-the-mill.—Janet Francis.


The gulf between fiction and non-fiction is seldom more than a thin veil of illusion, and this is never better demonstrated than by Sancha who, with living illustration and lucid description, brings us as close to an eyewitness account of fourteenth-century England as we shall ever have.

Using the Luttrell Psalter, Ordnance Survey maps, archaeological reports, and 'every scrap of available evidence,' she has recreated the 'village called Gerneham' in the times of Sir Geoffrey Luttrell. The reader is rewarded for studying the meticulous pictures, which correctly depict fourteenth-century timber-framed architecture, the use of hand tools, and the activities of the round of the seasons. Seldom are historical reconstructions done
with greater fidelity. We who tend to think that the world began in 1621 or 1776 forget that our ancestors came to the New World from these very villages. Those who examine this book from that view will find far more than mere history. Here are the roots of the Plymouth Plantation, Martin's Hundred, and Williamsburg. And if you walk the streets and fields of Provo you would be utterly amazed at how much of Germeham is intact here 650 years later. Farmers plowing fields this week are still struggling with the problem of ridge and dead furrow.--Thom Hinckley.


Mostly vintage Seuss, the butter battle is between two countries separated by a wall. On one side live the Zooks, who eat their bread buttered side down. On the other side live the right-thinking Yooks who know that the butter should be on top. Distrust between the two grows into border difficulties, which escalates into the development of increasingly serious weapons to prevent the other side from getting a leg-up. Eventually each side makes an armament capable of obliterating at least the entire country, and possibly more.

The vintage Seuss is the dancing language. "If he dared to come close/ I could give him a twitch/ with my tough-tufted/ prickly Snick Berry Switch." The rhythm is there, as are the invented and ever-ringing words. Additional vintage Seuss is the familiar squiggly art which seems to grow of its own will. The preposterous weapons could have sprung only from the head of the man on Mulberry Street. With their pipes and hooks and elephant power, they carry his signature. The non-vintage Seuss is the unfinished ending. Representatives from each side stand on the wall, each carefully holding a Bitsy Big-Boy Bomeroo between the thumb and forefinger. Who would first drop the instrument of total destruction? "'Be patient,' said Grandpa. 'We'll see./We will see...'."

In fairness, the situation in Seuss' allegory reflects accurately the uneasiness felt by many in today's nuclear world. But it offers no insight, no understanding, no alternative. As such, it maybe is more suitable fare for adults than children. Only the adult mind cannot perceive a possibility, conjure up a real option, or find a reason to hope.--Jim Jacobs.

Sunday Donaldson was the "adorable" daughter of a stage-struck mother. Shirley Donaldson was the happily married mother of two, but she had never quite forgotten the "exciting ice-skating career" for which she had worked so hard but which had been aborted when she became pregnant with Sunday. A snapshot taken of Sunday on the day her braces were removed awakened a new dream in her mother. Sunday was adorable—what could prevent her, with a little planning and good management, from achieving an exciting career in modeling? And so it all began.

The anticipation, the disappointment; the recognition, the resentment; the successes, the dashed hopes; the excitement, the missed childhood—all entwine like the warp and the woof in the fabric of the fashions the children model.

The author has effectively described a glamorous world which hovers always on the brink of despair. An excellent book highly recommended for the aspiring parents of young models and their "adorable" children.—Afton Miner.

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Sleep-walking? or is he awake? The youngest of the Stanley family seems to be both! This sequel to the other Stanley books, *The Headless Cupid* and *The Famous Stanley Kidnapping Case*, is as full of mystery as the previous novels. David, one of the older Stanley children, is having trouble at school, not academically, but socially. The trouble's name is Pete Garvey. To make matters worse, David's sister, Amanda, has a crush on Pete. His little brother, Blair, has begun sleepwalking, his parents are fighting and, as if that weren't enough, there are escaped convicts in the area. David's resolution of these conflicts is an interesting study in friendship and family loyalty.

The book is concise and clearly written and should be suitable to almost any age if read aloud. The characters are well portrayed and consistent and the action well suited to the setting.—Eric Fisher.

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The little black kitten with the big feet was different all right and not just because he had six toes on each foot. His barn-cat mother was uneasy about him from the beginning and tried to discourage his dangerous daydreaming. Whoever heard of a barn-cat
wanting a name? Only pets had names and everybody knew what
dreadful things happened to litters of "house" kittens which were
named all right but weren't really wanted. No, it was much better
living wild, but hard working, lives in the barn without names and
without nasty surprises.

The kitten wasn't convinced. All he could think about was
having a name and a home in a house. From the time the farmer's
little daughter discovered him in the hayloft, named him Tootsy
Wootsy, and took him to the house as a play kitten, through a
great many other adventures, both good and bad, until he finally
reached the home he was meant to have, the little black kitten
wanted only to have a name and to belong—which only shows what a
bright little black kitten he was. What could possibly be more
important?

Fine-crafted prose and appealing illustrations by Eric Blegvad
contribute to the success of this deceptively simple book for
middle grades.—Afton Miner.

8. LC 83-3058. $9.95. 144p.

Patti Trull is a very unusual person. Anyone with her courage,
optimism and sense of humor would be sure to stand out in a
crowd—even if she were standing on two legs. Patty probably
wouldn't be. She was fitted with a prosthesis shortly after a bout
with cancer necessitated the amputation of her leg. Fifteen years
later she still finds it easier to get around with crutches.

It was only a month after her fifteenth birthday that a painful
knee signaled the end of Patti's carefree, typically teenage
existence and the beginning of a frightening world filled with x-
rays, biopsies, chemotherapy and radiation.

Patti tells us of the rough times and the good times experienced
in getting on with her life. Her work as a therapist of cancer
patients in a children's hospital, though extremely difficult,
gave her purpose and brought her a great deal of satisfaction.
Like other attractive girls she was involved in dating but almost
every activity required that she relearn skills that had once been
as natural as breathing. Through the years her persistence paid
off and she is now able to bicycle, swim, ski and even ride in hot
air balloons. The only thing she absolutely can't do, it seems,
is jog.

Patti's life to date has been almost equally divided into two
parts—BC (before CANCER) and AD (after DESPAIR). Together the
periods add up to thirty-plus years of beautiful, vibrant, upbeat, and very productive living.

Highly recommended for ANYBODY 12 years and up.—Afton Miner.

PLAYS


This play is based on fact. It is about an underground youth organization called "The Young Guard," which was operational in Krasnoden, Russia, during the German occupation. Members of the Young Guard are interrogated by the Gestapo as the past unfolds in many different scenes in this memory play. We see the Guard as it becomes operational and follow its members as they are betrayed, captured, and executed.

**The Young Guard** is an excellent play demonstrating martyrdom, heroism and youth. The young victims of the Nazi war machine fight and die for what they believe in. However, this would be a difficult play to produce with its large cast (35+), numerous short scenes, Russian terms and names...a challenge for the performers and director.

High school students would enjoy performing this play. It has the potential of being a fine educational tool if the director is interested in supporting the script with study of Russian history and attitudes, Naziism, and facts about World War II. With background information, the young performers could do a better job of portraying the characters in the play.—Robyn Bishop.


Based on the book by Margery Williams, Boffey and Pilcher's musical version of **The Velveteen Rabbit** presents the adventures of a toy rabbit who becomes real. The playwrights have preserved the story, but not the spirit of Mrs. William's charming tale. In an attempt to modernize the original, they have made several extreme and unfortunate character changes.

Margery Williams' Nana is a crisp, no-nonsense nanny—a grumbling disciplinarian with a heart of gold. This musical version Nana is a rather sardonic creature (resembling Miss Hannigan from the musical **ANNIE**) who threatens the Velveteen Rabbit in song (Top Banana Nana): "You had better beware/ Or I'll tie your little ears in knots/ And shave all your hair." The wild rabbits who comfort