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Melanie Beecroft
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Carol V. Oaks
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See next page for additional authors

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Book Reviews

Authors
Vicky M. Turner, Melanie Beecroft, Emily Louise Allred, Carol V. Oaks, Thomas Kent Hinckley, Helen Hoopes, Catherine Bowles, Janet Francis, Gabi Kupitz, Peggy Jean Nixon, and Lillian H. Heil

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol10/iss2/3

Julie Peters is an attractive, well-known teen-age fashion model—all thanks to her mother’s ambition and management. When Julie can’t handle the stress and has a breakdown, the family moves to a small college town where her father can continue his experiments and Julie can disappear from the lime-light. Her first day at school is exactly the opposite of Julie's dream. One of her new friends, Laura Rider, talks her into demonstrating for "Animal Rights," and Laura’s brother, Jeff, sees it as a way to get some extra publicity for the group. When the reporters and photographers arrive, Julie is hurt and angry, and vows never to have anything to do with Laura or Jeff again. But again and again, fate seems to throw the three of them together. Julie is determined to show some independence from her mother, and makes the decision to learn to drive. Who ends up as her teacher? Jeff! As they drive and talk, Julie learns to respect Jeff’s feeling about animal experimentation, and begins to feel the same way. Disaster strikes when Jeff learns that Julie’s father is involved in some of the most cruel experiments that Jeff has ever seen.

The book is a compassionate plea for help. It is a graphic portrayal of what really happens to some animals when humans decide to use them for experimentation—needed or otherwise. One cannot read this book without wondering if such things are happening in our own communities. And, if they are, are they necessary or devised by prestige-seeking individuals with a "need" to be published? The characters and their inter-involvement also make the story memorable. Julie and Jeff are struggling with that age-old problem of how to deal with parents, how to love them, obey them and yet still grow into individuals with their own set of values.

-- Vicky M. Turner


Did I miss something here?????? The name of Isaac Asimov conjures up pictures of wonderful adventures in space—real and imagined—traveling forward through time, space and dimension, in picture and story to marvelous places enhanced with exciting undertakings. But this book......??????

Norby is a robot searching for his "roots." Jeff Wells is his owner, mentor, and advocate. Jeff is also attending space academy and Norby's "roots" lead him to earth.
8 BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

When Jeff's brother falls and sprains his ankles, Norby and Jeff are implored to return to earth to nurse him back to health. On earth, they find the great mystery of the "Robot Murderer." Someone is out to kill all the robots that inhabit the planet. One poor little robot taxi, seems to be used every time an assassination takes place, only it's memory is erased each time, and it is unable to identify the villain.

All the essentials of a great plot are here, only it falls short. People, robots and other things appear right in the nick of time to save the characters, and the plot, without the reader being given any explanation as to how or why. It would be nice to always be saved, to have a guardian angel up there somewhere, but it doesn't work that way in real life--and apparently not even in science fiction.

-- Vicky M. Turner


Fict

Kelly and her two best friends are determined to be the most popular girls in the seventh grade when school starts in the fall. Kelly decides that one way for them to accomplish this is to join the drama club and become stars of the production, "Cinderella," that is to be presented. But, disappointment and trouble are headed their way. First, Kelly's mother hates the theater because her mother ran away to it when she was a girl; therefore, Kelly has to sneak to practices so her mother won't realize what she is doing. Second, none of the three girls get the part she wants; in fact, Kelly doesn't even make the cast. She is put on the scenery crew. Kelly's disappointment is overcome by her realization that she has a talent for painting.

I really enjoyed reading the book. It was fast-paced and humorously written. The spots that Kelly gets herself into and out of and the problems that arise between Kelly's supportive grandmother and her angry mother are well thought out and almost resolved in the end. Kelly changes from being a bratty show-off, to a young lady with a good head on her shoulders.

-- Vicky M. Turner


Fict

In Brittain's Fantastic Freshman, Stanley Muffet discovers that being a V.I.P. is not the fun and glory he had imagined. Our hero accidentally acquires a magical helper and proceeds to receive A pluses with no effort, develops an infallible passing arm (except his team can't seem to take advantage of his skill), is pursued romantically by the head cheerleader (but she's an egotistical brat), and loses all his true friends (they think he's a snob). By the time Stanley discovers that a magic
spell is responsible for his fame (and the bad aspects that accompany it), he is only too happy to help undo the spell and return to his normal unimportant status.

Brittain's playful use of fantasy creates a believable situation in which Stanley finds out that the price of fame is too high. The irony of the magic is that Stanley gets his one wish to be a V.I.P., but everything else goes wrong. In many respects, this is the actual result in real life, even if fame comes through hard work and effort. The true-to-life consequences of fame make the fantastic part of the story seem believable. On the other hand, the magical spell allows Brittain to focus on the down-side of fame rather than having to create a realistic process by which Stanley could become a V.I.P.

Brittain has again demonstrated his talent for creating a believable mixture of realism and fantasy.

-- Lillian H. Heil


Arthur is just the type of big brother D. W. needs; he is perceptive as well as deceptive. This humorously illustrated picture book is about an aardvark family's trip to the beach. Arthur's little sister, D. W., definitely does not want to be there. She does not want to go into the water and she does not want to suntan. But, you can trust her brother to know how to get her into the water. He takes her for a shoulder ride and lets her lead him to where he wants to go! Splash!

The calm, straight-forward dialogue between D. W., her mother, her father, and Arthur substantially contrasts the irony of the situation in which a child demands that she doesn't like what she has never tried! The cool pastel water-colored illustrations seem to emphasize her hot, negative attitude. The refreshing outcome of this story should delight the young reader/listener and be a humorous example and method for parents to use when giving their own child an attitude adjustment.

-- Peggy Jean Nixon


After Juan is born in San Pablo, Guatemala, his father leaves his wife and infant son. The seventeen-year-old mother packs up her baby and moves in with her mother. In time, the young woman remarries, but Juan isn't allowed to live with her. Her new husband wants his own family, so Juan has to stay with his grandmother. He watches his grandmother arise at five o'clock every morning to start making the "arroz con leche" she sells in the market every day; he learns the
shoe-shine business; and he suffers through parental rejection and the birth of a
half-brother. All is not gloom and doom for Juan who is being nurtured by the love
of his grandmother and numerous uncles, aunts, and cousins.

The importance of education is stressed in this book without being over-done.
To have genuine pride in oneself, and to see beauty wherever one is, are some of the
themes in this gentle book.

-- Gabi Kupitz


Erika Norden is an up-and-coming teenage East German high-jumper. Her
athletic successes will not be her own to revel in, but they will elevate her family
(father, mother, brother Paul and grandmother [Omi]) in the eyes of the "system." One day, long-lost Uncle Karl (he didn't die during WW II?), Omi's brother, comes to call. As a guest of the government, this now prosperous West German businessman succeeds in charming the family, but Erika uncovers a terrible secret that draws the whole family into its net. Only in a country like East Germany can Uncle Karl's past and present doings be the extended family's present and future undoing.

Peter Carter has portrayed a realistically modern East German family into which the reader will be drawn. Equally realistic is his exposé of the East German Communist State, a system under which one is always suspect.

Robert Cormier, in reviewing *Bury the Dead*, wrote: "As in all fiction of a very high order, the reader puts down the book and says: 'Yes, this is how it is and how it has to be.' And in this case, I add: Damn it. Because Carter has made me care so much about Erika and her family."

A book hard to put down, and remembered long after the last page is read.
Winner of the Young Observer Teenage Fiction Award.

-- Gabi Kupitz


Fat, rosy-cheeked people, and delightfully detailed animals abound as they try to take even one small bite from a fast, clever pancake man. As he manages to elude a longer and longer list of hopeful mouths, the pancake man begins to think himself very skillful in baffling those who want to make him part of their next meal. Clever himself, he prepared for the even more clever pig. The self-satisfied smirk on the face of the pig at the end of this story is a pleasant treat for the eye, if not for
the pancake man. Don't forget to try the recipe at the beginning of the book to see if your pancake man turns out to be as intelligent as Ms. Cauley's.

-- Vicky M. Turner


This is the fourth book in the series of "Tales of Gom in the Legends of Ulm." We have watched Gom progress in this series from a young boy with some unusual powers to a wizard with the ability to fight and destroy Katak, the evil Spohr. Although you need not have read the complete series to understand this novel, there are one or two places that allude to past adventures.

Gom has left his mother, Harga, fighting the Spohr with the star people, and has come back through the stargate to Ulm to become a full-fledged wizard. His new master, Folgan, is a hard task master and seems little inclined to teach Gom the technique of becoming a wizard. Although Gom tries his hardest to win him over, Folgan seems always to mistrust Gom. Then the day of a great wedding is announced when Leana, a mortal from Lakelands, is to marry Urolf, of the immortal Yul Kinta, and unite the people together. At the wedding, three great jewels are presented: one to Leana; one to Leochtor, the Lord of the Lakelands; and one to Urolf. The jewels are all endowed with magic spells that could destroy the land if they fall into the hands of the evil Katak. Slowly, Gom realizes that he alone has the power to save Ulm and he must decide how he is going to do it.

Again, a hero is saved by the magical appearance of people and things, only this time it does work—and it works because the people and things that appear are given an explanation for their existence.

-- Vicky M. Turner


Clark's Horrible Hilda and Henry are so bad that their parents give them to the zoo where the two children make life miserable for the animals. When even the animals complain, the zookeeper puts the children in with Brian, the lion. The frightened children are finally intimidated into being good and their parents decide to let them come home again—along with Brian, in case Hilda and Henry ever feel like reverting to their former wild ways. At the end of the story, the lion has grown to like them and has to admit that no one would ever guess how horrible they used to be. In the foreground, the two children look at each other, laugh, and say, "Ha, ha! We'll see!"
Clark's light-hearted description of children who are so wild that they make the animals seem civilized is amusing, especially their introduction to the lion. It's the first time these miscreants have ever been afraid of anything, and the author plays up the situation with some funny suspense. The text reads: "Brian had a ferocious appetite. After he had finished his dinner, he ate . . . " (end of the page and the reader hastily moves on to find the end of the sentence) "Hilda's and Henry's as well." The part of the story that bothered me was that the author succeeds in convincing her readers that the children have really become human beings who care about others and enjoy being kind, considerate and helpful. At the surprise ending, when they sneer at the lion's comment (that they used to be horrible) my response was negative. They became sneaky and hypocritical--acting more like adults who put on an act when necessary to cover their true feelings about others. They were much less attractive than when they were straightforwardly wild. The author has succeeded in creating a surprise ending, but has turned the children into unfeeling, small creatures who don't enjoy good relationships with parents, and who are genuinely horrible.

-- Lillian H. Heil


Science photos can help us learn about the world around us, including the ways the body protects itself, and the clothing we use to keep warm. Vicki Cobb's photos enlarge the plaque bacteria, house dust, mites, and the structure of blood clots into a magnification as high as 10,750 times the actual size. The photographs are fascinating and they are loosely held together by the topic of protection for the body. However, because the organization of the topic isn't tight, the spectacular photographs almost overshadow the connecting theme of body protection.

When the house mites were shown, I was amazed (and a little appalled) at the number living in and under my bed. I wanted to know more, but wasn't sure I was ready to go from mites that eat dead skin, to the sneeze. Then the next topic was the skin (as a protective covering) and I wondered why it was not placed next to the section on the house mites since they clean up the dead skin cells for us. The other question that arose in my mind was: How do house mites protect the body? The photographs and information were interesting, but maybe the theme of the book should have been the scanning electron micrograph (the mechanism providing these greatly enlarged pictures) instead of body protection.

In summary, the photographs and text are very interesting, but the focus and organization seem to be controlled more by the pictures than by the topic. The
fascinating pictures and text could be used to motivate children's interest in enlargements of the world and of their own bodies as seen through the scanning electron micrograph.

-- Lillian H. Heil


It is difficult to imagine how to make a discussion of the inner workings of the human body entertaining to seven, eight, and nine-year-old youngsters, or even interesting to any except those who are destined to become scientists. Almost as if they had taken it on as a challenge, Cole and Degen attack the problem, solve it, and leave the scene with flying colors. The magic school bus stories share the format of a classroom taught by a most unusual teacher who has the ability to transport them, and their bus, at will, into unlikely locations and learning situations unheard of in curriculum guides. In this book, the bus is miniaturized and swallowed by an unwitting classmate and Mrs. Frizzle is off again.

Travelling through the digestive system, the circulation system, and exiting through the nasal passages, the children observe the workings of the body while making typical comments via the cartoon balloons ("I'm so grossed out," "Why can't we just have spelling tests like other kids?" etc.). The illustrations are detailed enough to be accurate, and free enough to be interesting. The text is brief, but the constant notes (in this case, in the form of brief themes written by the kids) supplement the information regularly. Arnold, the swallower, has a panel to himself on most of the double spread pages, maintaining his story-line until they are reunited. And my generation thought Jimmy Microbe was terrific!

-- Janet Francis


The book contains 25 pop-up Nursery Rhymes. Some of these are well-known Mother Goose rhymes while others are more modern rhymes that are less familiar to most children.

There is no table of contents, nor an index, so it is impossible to locate a needed rhyme. The binding of the book is poor and will not withstand the use that Mother Goose books usually have. The pop-up sections will soon tear and no longer function properly. I would not recommend this book.

-- Catherine Bowles

"Apple to Zucchini, come take a look. Start eating your way through this alphabet book." Bold, bright and vivid, the produce from your garden appears on page after luscious page. Maybe not a feast for the belly, but a not-to-be-forgotten feast for the eye. Also included, at the end of this book, is a glossary of all the fruits and vegetables previously pictured with a pronunciation guide as well as a history and other interesting facts.

-- Vicky M. Turner


The Star Maiden is based on the 1850 work by the Ojibway (Chippewa) chief Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh, who later took the name George Copway. The Ojibway Indians based their culture and language on the oral stories that were handed down from generation to generation. This retelling by Barbara Juster Esbensen is the story of a star maiden who appeared to a young brave on the top of a mountain. She told him that she had long gazed down at the earth and its people and she had decided that rather than remain as a star in the sky, she wanted to come to the earth and live. The wise men of the tribe talked about how this would be possible and finally invited her to come to the earth. She first entered a rose and then a prairie flower, but each presented problems. At last, gazing at the earth one night, she finds the perfect place.

The illustrations are quite wonderful. Each right-hand page contains the illustration. It consists of several different images. At the top center of the page is a large picture to accompany the free verse poetry which is on the opposite page. At the bottom of the illustrated page is a small (2 x 6 1/2") picture that also adds to the story. Framing both pictures are identical borders of Indian design on each side, and across the entire top is another border of a completely different design. All the colors of the borders pick up the colors of the two pictures and greatly enhance the whole effect. The reader will want to go back, after the story is over, and enjoy the rich Indian designs which make up the borders.

The story itself is very nice, but the illustrations make this a most enjoyable book that children will want to look at, again and again.

-- Helen Hoopes
A story in rhyme, that describes every sort of evasion children have attempted in prolonging the real reason for going to bed--to sleep. Take for instance the philosophy of the grasshoppers who believe that beds were made to jump on, not to sleep in:

Lucky hoppers have the knack,
Like rubber bands of bouncing back.
Too quick to follow with the eye,
Too hard to catch, don't every try!
A tumble, a pounce, a flying leap--
There's more to do in bed than sleep.

After all is said and done, a soft, snuggly friend seems to be the one thing that helps sleep come.

-- Vicky M. Turner

This book takes a lifetime of acute observation of the biosphere and distills it into detailed, three-dimensional panoramas. Following each of the ecoscapes is a key and details of the trees represented in the panorama. The amazing thing is how skillfully these represent temperate parts of Europe and North America. The deciduous wood, for instance, is an oak-maple-hickory polyclimax. The color and texture of each tree is so well done that you can pick out the different trees as readily as if you were standing in the woods.

In the coniferous wood vignettes, there is lifelike art of the male and female flowers on the pines, larches, and spruces. In the panorama, you can actually identify the ferns, shrubs, and flowers that grow in the clearings. The birds and animals are there, also.

The grasslands panorama is ravishingly beautiful. Here, in full bloom, are the compass plants (sun flowers), forget-me-nots, gaillardia, and many more. Now that it is possible to buy native meadow seed mixtures, it seems so inviting to plant a bit of native meadow. For years we have grown a flower that we dug up on the ditch bank. It is purple loosestrife. It is growing in the book, also.

The more experience and information the reader brings to this book, the more rewarding the book will be. This is a book that I shall ponder many times. I am also going to place a copy on reserve for my physical geography students to savor.

-- Thomas Kent Hinckley

Walt Disney was a man of talent, vision, and the ability to organize others. He was not a man that was always liked, and yet he has left a mark on our society that may never be forgotten. Although he had talent of his own that got him his start, he seemed almost to live ahead of his time anticipating the new and impossible. The full-length cartoon features were one venture that many did not anticipate would be successful. Another great success was the theme parks built around those cartoons. He used others to his advantage, and, at times, was used in return. He gave very little credit to others for their talents. It was always a "Disney Studio Production," rather than the creation of Bill Peet or Sterling Holloway or P. L. Travers. Yet, he is a man loved by at least one generation with the tradition seemingly carrying into another.

This is a well-written biography about a man who created much love, happiness, and anticipation in the general public, while at the same time, creating anger, jealousy, and fear in those with whom he worked. Although the book does not go into these feelings to any great extent, the subtle writing leaves us with an entirely different impression of a man who in public was always smiling. There are also many photographs included in this book of Walt, his brother Roy, and many others involved.

Another good book, partially on this subject, is the autobiography of Bill Peet. (Houghton Mifflin, 1989.) This one is filled with Bill Peet's whimsical drawings.

-- Vicky M. Turner


This book is written to show the many different actions and moods of a little boy. At times ("Most times at night, and mostly asleep"), we have an angel in the house, and at other times, we have a "Wild Animal." "But most of the time we have a little boy..." Foreman's idea is clever, and his illustrations are quite interesting, but his "Wild Animal" boy often looks like a monster instead of just a little boy with a mood-swing problem. Sixteen pages are dedicated to this "Wild Animal" image, six to the "Angel," and three pages to the "little boy" image. I think that the proportions are rather exaggerated. Yes, boys will be boys, but do we need to dwell on them so much? The illustrations are kind of fun--especially the flood where the water is rushing down the stairs with a piano in full sail and "Handel's Water Music" sheet music flying all over. I suspect that Foreman has written this book for parents.
CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW 17

with little boys who create absolute messes, but not for the young child. Parents will see the humor in the actions of this little boy, but boys are not animals and many young boys do not like to be referred to as an animal—even if they happen to act a little wild. My young reader was rather upset by the monster-like images illustrated in this book. I realize that books don't have to be didactic, but they should not portray children as little monsters.

-- Helen Hoopes


Tabitha (Tabby for short) has always dreamed of working with dogs, especially beautiful purebred dogs. When she lands a job as a live-in kennel aid, she is not only happy, but content. The owner, Turner Quinn, surprisingly turns out to be blind, but that doesn't stop him from running an exclusive kennel where a prestigious dog show is about to take place. When one of the judges turns out to be Turner Quinn's brother, a brother he has long hated, ominous happenings change Tabby's life. After a surprise conclusion, Tabby again finds herself doing exactly what she has always dreamed about.

The plot is mildly predictable, with the end twist nearly expected. For mystery fans, this would be a nice addition to their reading.

-- Vicky M. Turner


This book, drawn entirely from secondary sources, is Victorian in its historical outlook, and just wrong on a number of points. For instance:

... someone tosses a few bright blue rocks into a charcoal fire. The rocks soon grow hot and later cool into hard, rust-colored rocks. Someone hammers the strange rock with another rock and finds that it doesn't break.

This Victorian romancing about the discovery of copper was destroyed a generation ago by experimental archaeologists who demonstrated that the only way metallic copper can be released from ore is by using a forced draft—charcoal alone will not do it. Why not give the Etruscans credit for what they really did?
I am appalled that in the entire discussion of agriculture there is no mention of the effects that the Mediterranean climate has on the agricultural cycle. If my child brought this book home, I would come home the next night with a good translation of Georgics and we would learn what Roman agriculture was really like. And the next week it would be a copy of Vitruvius. And we would talk about how pozzolana cement is different from portland cement and why we are interested in pozzolana cement in modern construction. Maybe we would mix up some comparative batches in the back yard.

Why rely on secondary sources when the primary sources are so easy to come by? I refuse to accept the specious argument that a poor book is better than no book because "no book" is a mythical situation.

-- Thomas Kent Hinckley


There is a small boy in this story with a big imagination. As he and his father take a walk through the woods, he runs with the grace and cunning of a wolf--until he turns into one. Later, he spreads his arms and they become wings that carry him high above the world. He slips into the water of a brook and becomes a sleek, shining fish swimming there. When he finally begins to search for his father, all he can find is a strong, silent stag that seems to look at him with love.

-- Vicky M. Turner


As a struggling student of Spanish, I initially found *El Libro grande de las palabras de Spot* to be delightful. The wonderful illustrations leave no doubt as to what is being described. The English word, corresponding to the illustrated object, is directly on top of the Spanish equivalent. The book is arranged into sections so that all objects dealing with kitchen, for example, are on the left hand and right hand side of the page making a nice large spread as the book is opened. A couple of complete sentences describing the overall setting are in English and Spanish, also.

The weakness of the book lies in its lack of a pronunciation guide. Unless the parent or child is already versed in Spanish, the book would serve only as a word recognition guide, having little purpose for pronunciation. In addition, I found the Spanish word for mountains spelled "monanas." Perhaps, this is just one "little" oversight or typo of a word, but it should be spelled "montañas." Now, it makes
CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW 19

Other words suspect. This may present a pleasant academic activity for the adult who knows how to use a dictionary to look up the correct spelling, alternative words, phrases, or is reviewing his/her elementary Spanish, but it is not something children in good faith would do. It is annoying and definitely not a practice that should become standard, especially for a book about words.

-- Gabi Kupitz


This is a beautiful little picture book chronicling the first year of a baby's life. Written in poetry form, each page has only three words: "Baby's first ________." We see baby's first day, first night, first socks, first blocks, first hair, first chair, etc. The illustrations are done in pale pastels with lots of soft details. We see the child reacting with mother and father, with the household pets and with all the objects in her world. (We know the baby is a girl because of the dedication at the beginning of the book and the ribbons in her hair.) What a wonderful way to prepare a young child for the birth of a new baby. This book could also be used for a very young child to learn all the names of those objects in their own world. A soft, warm, cuddly sort of book. Highly recommended.

-- Helen Hoopes


Here is Steven Kellogg's newest carefully researched retelling of "Johnny Appleseed," a tall tale based on legends which grew from the recorded events in the history of John Chapman, the restless and infinitely generous pioneer known to folklore as Johnny Appleseed. Chapman travelled on foot through the lands of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana before they became states, planting apple seeds from which grew trees that provided precious fruit for innumerable early settlers. He died in 1845 near Fort Wayne; he lives in history and in legend.

Johnny Appleseed is another artistic tour de force: fascinating details, comic touches, lovely color work, and fascinating story line. It should be available to every child.

-- Carol V. Oaks
20 BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY


Dick King-Smith's menagerie of extraordinary animals is growing. Martin, the mouse-loving cat, joins his sheep-pig, to the delight of readers who march to their own drums. There is something particularly enticing about the matter-of-fact details that outline this story of a cat who wanted to keep a pet like the humans do. Not to eat, just to care for, fondle and love. When he instinctively catches Drusilla, a fat mouse who unwittingly runs close to his foot, Martin places her in an abandoned bathtub, a perfect home-cage complete with a ladies' room (the drain). Then he fetches, carries, and in fact, devotes his life to Drusilla and the eight babies who arrive immediately. In spite of the alternate life-styles of his brother, sisters, and mother, Martin is completely happy, but the mice are prisoners--birds in a gilded cage. With immense good humour (remember, this is an unusual cat), Martin is willing to release them, only to find himself a "pet," confined in lonely luxury and bitterly unhappy. At great risk he regains his freedom, meets a questionable new friend, and finally returns to his farm, a wiser (and larger) cat, now able to defend his mouse-loving position.

King-Smith speckles his writing with outrageous, sly puns (mouse-to-mouse resuscitation, Alec Smart) as well as deceptively casual comments on character and lifestyles. The result is a delightful tour de force with some of the wit of Animal Farm combined with the more gentle countryside ambiance of Beatrix Potter.

-- Janet Francis


Antonio's dog Bruno holds the hat into which the villagers throw coins while Antonio juggles apples and oranges, walks his tight rope, and plays lovely music on his guitar for them. Antonio's special friend, Daniela, loved his music; sometimes she slipped out of her wealthy father's big house and danced with him. Then one day, Daniela was stolen from her family by bandits who took her away on a stolen ship. Antonio and Bruno followed in a borrowed sailboat--and how Antonio managed to save Daniela and take her back home makes an exciting story for youngsters.

Anita Lobel's pictures are a lovely complement to Steven Kroll's vivid story.

-- Carol V. Oaks

Another book about dinosaurs?? Other authors have written excellent books about dinosaurs, but Lauber has capitalized on bringing readers information on the latest discoveries. Her format and organization focus attention on the contrast between a summary of information about dinosaurs, and a section highlighted by red lettered heading announcing: "The News Is." In these sections Lauber concisely describes the latest discoveries such as four new dinosaurs (Baryonyx, Mamenchisaurus, Deinonychus, and Nanotyrannus), or that dinosaurs used to be thought of as slow moving, but today we have new evidence of their ability to walk and run with agility and ease. An amusing mistake is that scientists put the wrong skeleton of a head with the wrong body to create a dinosaur that never existed. All of these up-to-date discoveries are accompanied by drawings and paintings done by artists who are paleontologists (study of life in former geologic periods) themselves giving us the latest visual hypotheses as to the appearance of these strange monsters.

At the beginning of the this interesting up-date on dinosaur discoveries, there is a pronunciation guide (always helpful since I struggle to pronounce the old names, to say nothing of newly identified dinosaurs), and at the end, there is a useful index for quick location of specific facts. Lauber has produced a well-written summary of old and new information about dinosaurs.

-- Lillian H. Heil


Where did Ben get so scared? Is this what always happens to kids sent to visit relatives they don't know—even for a day or two? Or is it what always happens to the youngest sibling when you are shy, uncertain of yourself and dreaming of adventure? Whatever the reasons, Ben was scared of lightning, the dark, new places, and, more than all of these together, dogs.

When Ben meets Aunt Rose, everyone he knows is envious—a real, live author who writes exciting boys' adventure stories. And Aunt Rose is pretty neat. She gives him a bunk bed and has him whip the cream for supper. But she also has a surprise for him which turns out to be the worst thing of his life. Little writes about children's problems, sometimes insurmountable. *Different Dragons* is a more gentle book, written for a younger reader about a more common, but nevertheless painful, problem. Ben's surprise is Gully, a dog. A lollaping, enthusiastic, overwhelming dog who inspires in Ben a soul-shaking fear. Hana, who lives next door to Aunt Rose, is older, braver, and ruder—and she would give her soul to own
Gully. Ben learns that no one is without fear when he and Hana are stranded in an unfinished attic, and he learns that fear can be overcome when he finds that Gully is afraid too. Most of all, he learns that facing fear and walking by feels better than being afraid. Hardly a new conclusion—but surely one that bears repeating.

-- Janet Francis


One of a series of books known as the Just Right Books. The cover indicates this book is for three and four-year-olds, but it will probably appeal to all age levels who love Mother Goose. Arnold Lobel's illustrations give the old rhymes a new flavor. The vivid colors, the detail and the action in the pictures will appeal to all.

The book contains a collection of fifty old favorites and some less familiar verses. There are one or two verses on each page and a separate illustration for each. All verses are taken from *The Random House Book of Mother Goose*.

-- Catherine Bowles


The ten Rosso children want a pet. And no matter how many times they ask, Mrs. Rosso always says "Ten children is enough. No pets." But, since they are moving from an apartment in New York City to a farm in New Jersey, their hopes of getting a pet are on the rise. Throughout the year, each child tries a different method of convincing Mr. and Mrs. Rosso to let them have a pet, but to no avail. Mrs. Rosso still says "Ten children is enough. No pets." However, when Mr. and Mrs. Rosso tell the children that they are going to have another baby, the rule is broken and the children get a pet.

Each chapter is written from the viewpoint of a different Rosso child, allowing the reader to see the personalities of each child, how they adjust to a new lifestyle, and how they cope with growing up. Any young reader who has longed for a pet will be amused by the children's attempts to persuade their parents to let them have a pet, such as adopting the Thanksgiving turkey, hiding a rabbit in a secret room, and valentines that say "A cat, a gerbil, a mouse, a frog. Why can't we get just one little dog?" The colorful jacket cover demands attention and invites the reader into the Rosso household. Pet or no pet, children will enjoy this book again and again.

-- Emily Louise Allred

Molly O'Connor often wonders about her mother who was killed in an automobile accident ten years ago. No one will talk about her. Molly makes a great detective when she begins putting small clues together which she gathers from her grandmother, her brother, and a crazy cousin. These clues, together with a letter her father receives, help her to find her roots which go back to the gold rush days of California.

There is a swift-moving plot filled with mystery and suspense which keeps the reader interested. The characters are well drawn and they seem like people you know. The style is contemporary, yet the past comes alive and seems real.

Fifth and sixth graders, as well as young adults will enjoy reading this book.

-- Catherine Bowles


The rags-to-riches story of Cinderella, again surfaces in this delightful book. The story is moderately different from the popular cartoon movie version, but is more in keeping with the tales of the French era. Cinderella is her same sweet self to the very end, her step-sisters are more self-centered than wicked, the step-mother is only slightly mentioned, and the father does not die. The moral is reinforced when, after marrying her handsome prince, Cinderella arranges for her sisters to wed local nobles. Ms. Goode has done an excellent job with illustrations that, at times, appear animated.

-- Vicky M. Turner


According to the introduction, this book is based on a story told by Polacco's father to the author and her brother about a boat ride that he and his sister had taken when they were little. The boat ride was with an old Indian woman, Lillian Two Blossom. In the story, Will is fishing and Mabel, the little sister, is asking him a million questions: "What makes it rain?" "Where does the wind come from?" "Why does the sun cross the sky?" "Who brings the night?" "How come the moon looks so cold?" Will, intent on his fishing, is trying to ignore her when out of the woods steps Lillian Two Blossom looking a little "ancient . . . and a little mussed up." She volunteers to answer all the questions if they will take her out in their
24 BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

... They agree, but as they begin rowing, the boat suddenly "jerked and heaved out of the water." Lillian Two Blossom suddenly becomes young again. The rest of the book covers their journey wherein Lillian Two Blossom answers all of Mabel's questions in a most wonderful way, all based on old Indian legends.

The illustrations are wonderful, too. From Mabel's bare, twitching toes, to Banana Joe's flopping ears (he's the goat), to the boiling, bubbling, foam-capped blue waves of the lake as they come down, this book is filled with bright colors, clever details, and warm feelings. Who could resist Mabel sucking her two middle fingers in her mouth or with her hands full of wilted yellow flowers. And the transformation of Lillian Two Blossom from the ancient, mussed up old lady to the beautiful, young Indian maiden lends a touch of magic to this well-told story. Lots of fun!

-- Helen Hoopes


Have you ever wanted to enter the mockingbird's world? Just open Mockingbird Morning by Joanne Ryder and you immediately step outside the door and into a magical world of nature guided by a silent, wide-eyed young girl. Pick a fuzzy peach; become a thin, green dragonfly; and gather goose feathers as you walk through woods and fields where hairless turtles, tiny ants, and golden fish dwell.

This enchanting book is magical for all ages. Each page contains a short descriptive poem that encourages the reader to use their eyes, ears, and touch to explain the world around them and delve into the imagination of watching cloud figures escape across the sky or comparing fluffy dandelions to "small round moons rising above the grass" as "bees in fat fuzzy suits wander like astronauts from moon to moon ..." Each description is complemented by rich, sun-drenched drawings of vivid animal life against a mottled background of greens, golds, and blues. In each illustration is a portion of our silent guide as she shares in our journey.

Mockingbird Morning is timeless. It allows us, both child and adult, to step back from our harried life of modern-day inconveniences into a more gentle world. The serenity and wonder portrayed through style-of-writing and vibrancy-of-picture make this an enjoyable and treasured book for all ages.

-- Melanie Beecroft
CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW 25


Peter Catalanotto has done a superb job illustrating this interesting story of a boy learning to see the world through the artist's eye. The pictures (including the book jacket which picture is not included in the book) are full of lovely splashes of greens with lots of accents of blues and reds. The story is of a little boy, Charlie, who happens upon a young man, Gregory, who is a painter. Gregory has set up his easel at the edge of a lake, and is painting what he sees. (Would you believe big, blue whales in a lake?) The first few days, Charlie remains in the background (we see only the top of his head) watching Gregory paint. When the painting for the day is completed, Gregory gets into his canoe, takes his cat and paddles out into the middle of the lake where "He lays flat on his back in the bottom of the drifting boat, staring straight up at the sky." Finally, Charlie ventures out to the easel and leaves pictures and notes for Gregory whom he has decided he is "fond of although they had never met." Eventually they become friends and Gregory teaches Charlie all about painting and how to see things that are "waiting to be seen and to be painted."

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, both in the reading and the looking. Gregory is painted with a very bulbous nose, a big black mustache (he looks surprisingly like Peter Catalanotto without the mustache!), and a big smiley face. The best part of the illustrations, though, are the reflections in the water, the shadows of the leaves on the white tree trunks, the shimmer of the water and the lushness of the green vegetation. A peaceful, pleasing book that will lead to discussions with children about all kinds of topics.

-- Helen Hoopes


This book is the just announced 1988 Greenaway Award winner. There are many afraid-of-the-dark books, but this one is different. When you read it out loud to a child, somehow the words get twisted around your tongue and woven through your mind and suddenly you are rushing and rollicking through a sight/sound experience unlike anything else.

The pictures are, well, saggy, baggy, beary. Seldom does an artist make such telling use of complementary color. Big Bear keeps trying to go back to his Bear Chair and read his Bear Book while Little Bear sleeplessly cavorts through the bed clothes. And Big Bear has to put down his Bear Book and talk to Little Bear about why he is being afraid of the dark. . . . I don't just read this book, I live it. I read it
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to my daughter, but we still go on playing Bear Games. And I love it--the Bear Games and the Bear Book.

-- Thomas Kent Hinckley


Tom Thumb's story is retold in this delightfully illustrated book. A bird's-eye-view of Tom feeding kittens milk with a thimble is the first of this book's many gorgeous, full-color illustrations that show how Tom earned the status of the smallest Knight of the Round Table. Tom's journey is not easy. He must learn to cope, not only with the huge world around him, but also with finding his way out of many adventures and misadventures in his quest to rescue his country from the Giant. As one reads the story, one's eyes constantly search the illustrations for a new bit of beauty. This book will delight anyone who picks it up, and in my book, a definite must for the library.

-- Vicky M. Turner


In rhyme, somewhere between fact and fantasy, Nancy Willard brings Robert Louis Stevenson from London to America by way of a cargo-carrying steamer. In 1887, the tramp-ship, *Ludgate Hill*, was Stevenson's oceanic transport. Through letters home, Stevenson expressed his joyous feelings about being at sea.

Now, Nancy Willard sends the reader on Stevenson's adventurous voyage. Magically, through a wondrous choice of words and by way of clever illustrations, imaginations are set adrift.

London and Scotland, goodbye!
We shall feast on mutton and pie
till light as a cork we arrive in New York
under a buttermilk sky!

Alice and Martin Provensen, who illustrated Willard's 1982 Newbery Medal winner, *A Visit to William Blake's Inn*, and in the process won a Caldecott Honor Award for the work, illustrate this delightful adventure.

-- Gabi Kupitz

*Puppets* is an invaluable resource book to the art of puppetry for the individual who wants to make a puppet—now! The techniques range from the very simple to the more complex. Step-by-step colored photographs of each technique make this an encouraging guide. Included in the book are: ideas for stages, a brief history of puppetry, a list of books and further information on the art of puppetry, equipment and materials needed, and a page of encouragement.

-- Gabi Kupitz