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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol15/iss4/5

* 5+ BI  
Reviewed by Jan Staheli

"It was December 27, 1904—opening night for J. M. Barrie’s new play, *Peter Pan: Or the Boy Who Would Not Grow UP.*

"Peter Pan gasped as Tinker Bell fluttered down and came to rest on her tiny bed.

"'Why, Tink, you have drunk my medicine! It was poisoned and you drank it to save my life! Tink, dear Tink, are you dying?''"

"Peter Pan threw his arms out toward the audience and cried for them to save Tink. ‘Do you believe in fairies? Say quick that you believe! If you believe, clap your hands!’"

"Thunderous applause filled the theater, and the actress playing Peter Pan was so startled she burst into tears."

Thus begins the absorbing life story of James Barrie, author and playwright extraordinaire, who loved children, and rather resembled one, really—not only in stature, but in his zest for life and his delight in the company of other children. This story follows Barrie’s life, but pays particular attention to the story of how *Peter Pan* came to be, and how it progressed from its beginnings to the stature it holds today. It is said there is rarely a time when there is not a production of *Peter Pan* on a stage somewhere in the world, so universally loved is the story of the boy who refused to give up childhood.

The book is delightful to look at as well, with an Arthur Rackham illustration on the cover, and many photographs of Barrie and the people in his life. The pictures are well placed to enhance the text, which is clearly written. I think this would be a pleasing book for children or adults who enjoy biographies or who have a special interest in Peter Pan and the man who dreamed him.

★★★★★

**Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell**

*Baba Yaga and the Little Girl* is a Russian folktale illustrated and written by Katya Arnold. This is the author’s first children’s book. The wicked stepmother sends her stepchild to visit her sister, but before she goes, the little girl visits her own aunt who gives her important advice. And who does the stepmother’s sister turn out to be? Baba Yaga, who eats little girls! Following her own aunt’s advice, the little girl escapes because Baba Yaga’s cat, dog, and gate respond kindly to the good things she gives to them. Baba Yaga had been selfish and mean to everything and everyone.

The author uses what is known as Russian “lubok” art for the boldly colored illustrations, which give a unique charm to this story of the well-known witch Baba Yaga. The jagged, intense lines portray well the cruel nature of the witch. A great read-aloud selection.

◆◆◆◆


**Reviewed by Rachael Williams**

In this book, the first verse of Bates’ traditional song is illustrated with fourteen brilliant paintings of natural and man-made wonders of America—from Niagara Falls, to the Grand Canyon to Mesa Verde to the Statue of Liberty. The paintings are acrylics done in a modern impressionistic style. Waldman explains in his foreword that the paintings are a visual record of a cross-country trip he took with a friend from Israel. He further explains, “I have traveled to four continents and more than a score of countries, but nothing I have seen can match the magnificent splendor that lies within our own borders.” Readers are sure to recognize a few of their own favorite sites, and there is a brief explanation of each at the end of the book. A delightful book for readers of all ages!

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**PT PB**

Reviewed by Rachael Williams

Editor Sara Jane Boyers brings together the complete lyrics of "America the Beautiful" and the fascinating work of contemporary artist Wayne Thiebaud, and the result is a fresh and insightful look at America. Everyday objects, cityscapes, and landscapes are used to celebrate a modern, vibrant nation. The artwork was done in watercolor, oil, and pastel on a variety of surfaces. Thiebaud’s style incorporates elements of abstraction into representational painting, using a bright color palette. Brief, well-written biographies of both author and illustrator are included at the end of the book. This book is a wonderful way to introduce children to contemporary art.

★★★★★


**FI**


* **FI**

Reviewed by Lillian Heil

*The Examination* is the story (set in sixteenth-century China) of two brothers, one a brilliant scholar, the other a practical clever young man who lives by his wits. *Deep Dream of the Rain Forest* is set in 1920 in the jungles of Borneo. It tells how a fifteen-year-old English boy, captured by Ibans, learns to appreciate their beliefs and to help them understand their dream prophecy. Bosse is an incredibly good writer. His knowledge of history and human nature makes his stories compelling and his characters real. His books succeed verbally and psychologically. But only one of the stories achieves the highest level of writing—the spiritual. *Deep Dream of the Rain Forest* leaves the reader with important eternal truths. This happens as Harry changes from an arrogant product of the "civilized" world to a young man who empathizes and learns to respect the very different beliefs of two teenage members of the Iban tribe of Borneo. *The Examination* is equally well written, but the two brothers never get beyond learning what their own abilities are. They survive exciting and hair-raising adventures; they appreciate each other. But the scholar settles down to the secluded life of a scholar, and the practical member of the family becomes
Brigham Young University

a soldier. The latter's motive is the excitement of battle/ he is a destroyer of life. The scholar loves to meditate in an abstract way, divorced from the practical realities of life. The two brothers represent two completely different ways of life, and neither learns from the other. The story ends as it began, with the brothers appreciating each other's abilities but not changing and growing.

The following four large-format pictorial atlases are beautifully colored and full of maps on two-page spreads. Each map is surrounded by illustrations and blocks of text. The text provides a short history and description of map features, such as major cities, famous country pastimes, or geological features. The language is clear and understandable. Each atlas includes a section of how to use the atlas, a table of contents, and an index. The Eyewitness Atlas of the World and My First Atlas also include a glossary.


Reviewed by Lisa Baer

My First Atlas is divided into maps of large areas of the world, such as Antarctica and Southern Europe. Interspersed on the pages are questions that can be answered by looking at the maps. Each map has a feature called "Take a journey," which tells the reader how long it takes to travel by car and by plane from one end of a red line drawn on the map to the other end of the line. The line usually extends from one end of the country or continent to the other. This is helpful in understanding relative distances. My favorite feature is a road sign on the bottom right corner of every spread that tells what is on the next page. When you are looking at the map of the United States, the road sign reads "To Mexico" and points to the right edge of the page. By the road sign you see a picture of a car and an airplane (sometimes a boat and an airplane, depending on the country) heading for the next page. This feature creates the feeling that you are actually traveling to the next country and helps the book flow smoothly from one spread to the next. I did not put the book down until I had seen each page in its proper order. I highly recommend this colorful and interesting atlas.

A 8+ NF Reviewed by Lisa Baer

Over twenty professional cartographers, computer operators, researchers and editors contributed to *Eyewitness Atlas of the World.* The atlas begins with information on space, earth geology, climate, and population. Then, starting with western Canada and Alaska, maps of individual countries or regions are shown. The maps are clean and uncluttered. They include identification of the larger cities and major national resources such as mining, agriculture, and industry. A keybox on each spread lists the symbols that appear on each map. The language is geared to high school students. There is so much information in this 160-page atlas that readers will discover something new every time they open it. I did find a mistake on the page that covers Utah. A picture of the Salt Lake Temple is labeled the "Jordan Mormon Temple." Except for this one mistake, I found this atlas to be an excellent resource for young readers and adults alike.

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A 5-11 NF Reviewed by Lisa Baer

*The Earth Atlas* provides a fun way of discovering how our planet works by teaching geologic principles such as plate tectonics, erosion, rifting, and seismic waves. The atlas is divided into maps that demonstrate each principle. Sections include "Explosive Volcanoes," "Continents Collide," and "The Ocean Floor." The author, who has been a geologist for over twenty-five years, works in London's Geological and Natural History Museums. She has also written other earth science books for young readers. The drawings of earth models and geologic cross-sections are extremely well done. Toward the end of the book there is an excellent section on earth ingredients. Igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks are explained. Beautiful photographs illustrate minerals that can be found in each type of rock. This atlas provides a colorful and interesting introduction to earth science.

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Reviewed by Lisa Baer

*The Oceans Atlas* is divided into the five oceans of the world, with subsections describing the unique features of each ocean. There are also sections on general ocean topics, such as fishing, shipping, and exploration. Each feature or concept is explained in a short paragraph or two. For example, the section on continental margins uses the terms *continental shelf*, *continental slope*, and *continental rise*. Each of these terms is defined elsewhere on the page with lines pointing to where they occur on the map. Photographs, charts, and graphs are also included on the page for further explanation. This atlas would be very useful in teaching children about the oceans of the world.


Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

*Copycat* is “a story of four friends who live together.” Each has a distinctive personality. Buddy the cat is a copycat. Baby, another cat, likes her basket, so Buddy climbs in too. Buddy copies the squirrels on the wall as well as the birds. However, when Buddy copies his dog friend Bessie’s habit of chewing on bones, there is trouble! He finds out that a cat’s teeth are not made for bones.

The soft, realistic illustrations support the text. Alternating full and half pages cleverly surprise the reader. The inspiration for this book came from Ruth Brown’s own pets. Children who love animals will be drawn to this book.


Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Herculeah Jones is on the trail of a real mystery. Her father, a police detective, and her mother, a private “eye” are both snoop ing around the old Dead Oaks mansion. Then a huge, evil-looking man appears and hires Herculeah’s mother to do a job for him. Herculeah calls him the Moloch and
feels compelled to find out what he is doing in town and what connection he has
to Dead Oaks.

This is a fast-paced mystery with intriguing situations and the appealing
characters that Byars is so good at producing. For middle school readers who
like a good dilemma to puzzle over, this would be a very reliable book.

$17.00. 325 pp.

Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

It is a little-known fact of history that Italy occupied a strip of French
territory along the Swiss and Italian borders from November 1942 until July
1943. During this time, many who were escaping Nazi terror moved into this
area to be under the protection of the Italian Army. When the Italians left
France, they took with them as many refugees as they could. This is the setting
for Corporal Vito Salvani’s adventures to reach his homeland of Italy. He
travels with little Judah, a Jewish orphan, and Monsieur Palet and the Milice are
in deadly pursuit. Salvani must cross mountains with Judah, with whom he
develops a bond, to reach his family in Italy, where he hopes to raise Judah as
one of his own children. Meanwhile, Palet wants Judah because he is a Jew and
probably has diamonds sewn into his clothes.

Not just another Holocaust story, this book does not portray all German
soldiers as Nazi Jew killers. Man’s inhumanity to man is often sabotaged by
strangers, plain-clothed or in uniform, with more respect for life than nationality
or race. The consequences of being uncooperative with the Gestapo are quite
graphic and the suspense does not wane—a white-knuckle experience until the
very last page.

Cooke, Trish. *So Much.* Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. Candlewick Press,

Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Mom and baby are at home alone when the door bell rings. One by one,
relatives assemble—Auntie Bibba, Uncle Didi, Nannie, Gran-Gran, Cousin Kay-
Kay, and Big Cousin Ross. They all want to hug, kiss, squeeze, and play with
the baby because they love him so much. The family has gathered to surprise
Daddy with a birthday party. Baby protests the end of the party and goes to bed remembering how much he is adored.

Cook’s inspiration for this story is her own family and their interaction with her baby. In a well-crafted story she captures the joy of being part of a large extended family. Oxenbury brings humor and warmth in her bright, bold illustrations rendered in gouache. Personality and emotion fill the characters’ faces. The family plays and dances across the pages of this book and right into the reader’s heart. A rhythmic read-aloud for toddlers in libraries and nursery schools or a snuggle-up lap book for parents to share with their children.


Reviewed by Kathryn Whitworth

Samantha S. Van Dorf wears fur coats and designer clothes and is driven to school in a limo. The narrator of the story thinks Samantha is a snob, but her friends Leslie and Rita like Samantha. One day, Samantha invites all the kids to her birthday party, and the narrator dreads going. When it comes time to pick partners for games, the narrator and Samantha are left together. They make mistakes until the last race, when they win. They sit next to each other to eat and find that they both have a flower squirt ring. They are new friends.

This is an easy reading book for younger children, good for a classroom teaching tool. Besides using simple language and plot, the author teaches a lesson. On almost every page are illustrations that could tell the story alone.

This book will help children enjoy reading.


Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

These two books are part of a new series of informational books, *Food and Feasts*. There are eight books in the series: In the Middle Ages; In Ancient Rome; In Ancient Egypt; Between the Two World Wars; In Tudor Times; With the Aztecs; With the Vikings; and In Ancient Greece. The books discuss the kinds of food people ate in everyday meals and on special occasions. They tell not only what meals were like for the nobility, but for the peasants as well. At the end of each volume are easy to prepare recipes of foods likely to have been prepared.

I thoroughly enjoyed these books. They are filled with illustrations, many dating from the time period discussed. From the Middle Ages: “Trenchers, thick slices of stale brown bread with a slight hollow in the middle, were used as plates. Rich people ate round bread called manchets, which were placed next to the stack of trenchers at the beginning of the feast. . . . [After a feast] Trenchers were not eaten but collected in baskets after the feast and given to the poor.” Table manners are discussed, as well as farming and other aspects of life affected by the need for or enjoyment of food. From Ancient Rome: “In order to feed so many hungry mouths, food production had to be highly organized. It became one of the Romans’ most important industries. . . . At the time of the emperor Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D. 14) the city of Rome used fourteen million bushels of grain every year.” Each volume includes a glossary and an index. I highly recommend these books.


Reviewed by Lillian Heil

*Mother Crocodile,* an African folktale, is a reissue of the book that was originally published in 1981. It is a cautionary tale on the evils of war; it also might be considered a symbolic history of Africa.

Rosa Guy’s translation captures the vigorous language and rhythms of oral tales: "Of all the animals that fly in the air, walk on the earth, or swim in the water, the craziest must be the crocodiles, who creep on the earth and walk on
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the bottoms of rivers"; or the description of Thio the Parrot: "Thio's round tongue jumps around in her hooked beak tasting all the gossip of the world before she spits it out." Steptoe's illustrations fit the story in some usual and some unusual ways. His watercolors look like African prints, but they are as light and airy as Japanese art. The crocodiles are in shades of blue-green and lavender. The colors make the lethal lizards more likeable and very pleasant—entirely appropriate for the central characters. In contrast, all the land animals are darker—the birds, the monkey, and the villagers. The darkest and most sinister of all are the soldiers, who wantonly destroy people, land, and animals. Guy has made the tale a delight to hear; Steptoe has made it a visual delight, and both combine to make a powerful appeal against war.


Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

A Pre-6 NF

The Chinese praying mantis is large enough to be on a leash! Although it may look dangerous, the Goliath Beetle of Africa is harmless and is sometimes kept as a pet! Children will be able to learn about thirteen BIG insects in this colorful book.

This publication's many features make it a must for the school or public library's nonfiction collection. Margery Facklam has written an interesting, easy-to-read text. In addition to information about each of the insects, an introductory section answers the question "How Big Can a Bug Be?" and explains the parts of an insect's anatomy. The full-page, life-sized illustrations are on the page opposite the text. Even preschool children would be held by the detailed and inventive illustrations while the text is read. The insects look as if they are alive as they crawl around the interesting scenes that Paul Facklam has created. Children and adults will be intrigued as pages are turned and they see praying mantises investigating a can of screwdrivers and wrenches, the Madagascar hissing cockroaches crawling over building blocks, and Hercules beetles feasting on an apple. The Big Bug Book also includes a table of contents and a glossary.

* Pre-2 PB

**Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen**

* * * *


* A 4+ NF

**Reviewed by Helen Hoopes**

With rich detail and beautiful illustrations, Jean Craighead George and Thomas Locker retell the story of the first Thanksgiving. The story begins and ends with the history of Plymouth Rock, once two hundred tons of rock in Plymouth Harbor, now splintered, broken in two, dropped, moved, and trimmed to fit under its present-day portico. The story centers on Squanto, a Pawtuxet Indian, who, in the early 1600s, along with sixteen other Indian men, was captured by Englishmen and taken to Spain to be sold into slavery. Squanto was sold to an Englishman and finally made his way back to his home village, which he found empty, destroyed by an European plague. When the Pilgrims (mostly city people with no experience living off the land), landed the next year, Squanto appointed himself their teacher. The following fall, with ninety Indians, mostly uninvited, the Pilgrims spent three days feasting and playing games to celebrate their bountiful harvest.
George, an avid researcher, not only tells the story of this first Thanksgiving celebration, but she also fills this beautiful picture book with many unknown, little bits of information that are historically accurate. Did you know that Plymouth was built on the ruins of the Pawtuxet’s village where Squanto had lived before his captivity? Did you know that after a bitter first winter, only fifty-seven Pilgrims and half the crew survived out of the 102 men, women, and children who originally came on the Mayflower? And not even one of them asked to go back to England when the Mayflower left for England the following spring? Fascinating reading. The illustrations make the reader feel like a Pilgrim. The rolling waves of the sea during the crossing, the lushness of the forests where Squanto took the Pilgrims to find game, the seascapes and the landscapes—all are beautifully done and add depth and radiance to the story of survival and renewal. Well done!

★★★★
"A Baby Albatross Crashes." Taken from *Birds of Antarctica*. Copyright by Jennifer Owings Dewey. Reprinted by permission from Little, Brown & Company.
Books for kids about sex are always tricky. Many either give too much information too graphically or are so oblique in their explanations that they pass on little or no information at all. This book strikes just the right note. The kid-friendly explanations reflect good science. The illustrations are clever and cartoonlike and just right for the target age. Discussions about homosexuality and premarital sex are nonjudgmental and nonpreachy, and there is discussion about responsibility for possible results of premarital sex. The book also discusses the right to say no and explains that it is wrong to hurt or force another. The author urges kids to think ahead and make their decisions about such things ahead of time, talking things over with a trusted adult, before they find themselves in a situation that demands an action one way or the other. There is talk about feelings and emotions rather than "just the facts m'am."

Robie's book covers all the bases. The information clear and accurate. The illustrations help define the facts. The tone ensures that the book can be read without confusion or embarrassment. The humor and the light touch do not blur the message; they enhance it. This is a must-have for school and public library collections.

Sex education is always a touchy topic, and the subject will not be made less volatile by *It's Perfectly Normal*. This book sets out to present not only the straight facts about puberty and reproduction, but also such subjects as birth control, abortion, sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV), and homosexuality. Harris seeks to reassure young people that their sexual feelings and their curiosity about sex are normal, and he tries to anticipate and answer their questions objectively and specifically.

Harris succeeds a little too well for conservative parents, who are likely to be alarmed by the detailed descriptions and by the absence of moral prohibitions against abortion, masturbation, and homosexuality. Parental alarm will be compounded by Emberley's illustrations. Although generally wholesome, they...
include depictions of sexual intercourse and masturbation which some will find offensive.

It’s Perfectly Normal deals well, however, with the anxieties of puberty. Harris and Emberley are at their best when discussing problems that preoccupy adolescents. For example, they emphasize the variety of normal body shapes and sizes. Harris is particularly good at acknowledging when confusion and anxiety surround a topic: the chapter on sexual abuse is a model of sensitivity and clarity.

The tone of the book is generally upbeat. Even disheartening subjects such as HIV are presented in a sensible way so as not to increase youthful fears. This commonsense, positive approach could serve parents well as a guide for discussing sex with their children and teenagers. This type of book should, of course, be reviewed by parents first to see if it is suitable for their youngster. However, It’s Perfectly Normal is a brave effort and could be helpful, providing that parents offer moral guidance.


B+ 3-5 FI Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Jonathan is the new kid. That’s enough of a problem, but his life is complicated by the class bully, Vince. Vince has made it a matter of personal pride to take Jonathan’s lunch money every day. Matters go from bad to worse when the poodle next door lunges to bite Vince during a lunch money “donation” and bites Jonathan instead. The man who owns the poodle tells Jonathan to come see him if anything strange begins to happen. It doesn’t take long. That night, Jonathan awakens to find himself small, fluffy and four-legged—a werepoodle! Will Jonathan’s mother find him before he changes back? Will he find the answer to this puzzling behavior? Will he locate the antidote before it is too late, and he is trapped in a poodle body forever?

This book is written in a light vein for intermediate readers. It is fast-paced and humorous, with a nice twist as Jonathan the dog communicates with other dogs to find the wolfbane bone that will cure him of his terrible affliction. Children should enjoy a quick, funny read here.

* 2-5 PB

Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

From building a log cabin at age two to lifting a wagon train out of Dejection Swamp at age twelve, tall-tale heroine Angelica Longrider faces one amazing adventure after another. The most harrowing is a wrestling match with a bear named Thundering Tarnation, who is stealing the settlers’ precious food. Issacs’ first children’s book captures the hyperbolic humor of traditional tall tales, and Angel is as memorable as Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, or any of the female folk heros in San Souci’s well-researched *Cut from the Same Cloth* (1993).

The details of Angel’s fantastic feats are rendered with folk art flare in lively oil paintings on cherry, maple, and birch veneers. The rich oils on the wood complement this original tall tale, which is set in rural Tennessee. With illustrations equal to Zelinsky’s *Hansel and Gretel* and *Rumpelstiltskin, Swamp Angel* is a Caldecott Honor book. This new female folk hero story will be a welcome addition in school and public libraries.


A 2-4 NF PB

Reviewed by Denice Barainca

Miss Prime and her animal students learn about fractions and sets by using them in real life. Otto the alligator gets hungry when he thinks of a bowl of ice cream with half chocolate and half vanilla. Ginger the rabbit plants half her garden with flowers and half with vegetables. Fay the cat likes to cut her pie into fourths. Tally the dog finds that he can’t sell lemonade in the winter until he reduces the price by three-fourths.

Sadie the chicken fixes lunch for herself and three friends using four whole apples, the halves of two oranges, and a watermelon cut in fourths. When Miss Bovine arrives just as they are ready to eat, Sadie quickly chops the fruit into fruit salad and divides it into fifths.

This book is Loreen Leedy’s eighteenth from Holiday House. As usual, she entertains while she teaches. She writes "HALF for fun, and HALF for learning.” Five brightly colored cartoon-style stories make reviewing fractions enjoyable for all ages.

B- 5 FI Reviewed by Kathryn Whitworth

Shortly after WWI Baltimore is a progressive city, but its people are still separated by class and prejudice. Through the eyes of young Dorothea Werner, the author tells a story of loss, love, and prejudice as Dorothea confronts these issues for the first time. The Ragman is a Black "arraber" who travels through town calling out his song for rags. Like others in the town, Dorothea doesn't understand why her mother gives him the title "Mr." or calls him her friend. She is scared that the Ragman is going to take her away and feels that he is somehow connected with her mother's recent death from pneumonia. When Dorothea is forced to take fabric scraps out to Mr. Stubs, she begins to learn a little about him and the life he once led. Her perspective begins to change, and they become friends.

This book explores change, growing up and accepting new things. It is easy to read, and although there are no illustrations, the author's descriptions make it seem as if there were. She gives subtle hints to the reader, like the fact that Mr. Stubs is black. However, sometimes she is a little too subtle, and the reader is often left wondering what the point of the story is. In some places there is too much detail and in others not enough. The story is not superb, but overall it is well written, and it explores the complexities of dealing with the death of loved ones and with prejudice.

★★★★


A 6-8 FI Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Alison, Bunny, and Jericho are all thirteen and about the same height. They attend the same unusual private school run by Jericho’s father, the Mending Wall school, a New England boarding school with a unique philosophy. "Fugleman" is Jericho’s father’s title. “In German, it means some kind of leader. . . . [He] claims that his students come first in importance, and he would never dream of controlling their minds.” They study the “Three C’s”: cognizance, culture, and conscience. So unusual happenings are part of the daily life at this school. But until Nick walks through the kitchen wall, right where the height chart is, no one had visited from the future.

Jericho and Alison have been best friends for a number of years and even though Jericho has romantic interests, Alison proclaims she is strictly a "hands-
Alison’s mother runs a “Curly Girl” beauty salon and is about to marry Alison’s father (whom Alison has never met or heard of), and she wants them all to move to Alabama. Mother wants to turn Alison into the new Curly Girl. There couldn’t be any life farther from Alison’s heart.

Nick is from the future when the “Fugleman Homestead” is a national exhibit and his family are the caretakers. Alison, Bunny, and Jericho visit Nick’s time, and Alison decides to stay. The key to getting through the wall is to be the right height, so the opportunity to pass through does not last long. By the end of the book, Jericho has already grown too much.

Anne Lindberg died shortly before this book was published. Her style is unique: light and humorous with serious undertones. Jericho is the first-person narrator, and he uses footnotes because he “hates stories that sneak in a lot of information you never asked for. . . . That way, you can choose whether to be informed or not.” It was sometimes hard to notice the asterisks that indicated a footnote, and I’d have to scan back up the page to see what was footnoted. Perhaps it will help readers to be more aware of regular footnotes. They were always worth reading. I don’t know if I can sanction Alison’s decision to run away—but it would be a good jumping off place for a discussion about responsibility and acceptance of life as it is. It was entertaining, thought provoking and worth reading.


* Pre-3 PB Reviewed by Ellen Riddle

This is the perfect book to read when you’re feeling under the weather. It’s a counting book of farm animals and their various ailments. The rhyming text also tells how the animals take care of themselves. “Eight oxen sniffle. . . . eight oxen blow.” (The illustration shows each one with a tissue on its nose.) It’s a truly fun book, just the kind for sharing at storytime. The illustrations are done in a cut paper collage style and are so real you can almost feel the textures. The animals’ expressions are magnificent without being too anthropomorphic. They seem to be “udderly” miserable. A sure winner!

* 3-5 FI Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

Patricia MacLachlan’s sequel to the Newbery medal winner *Sarah, Plain and Tall* is a delightful continuation of Sarah’s life on the prairie. When a drought threatens their prairie life, Jacob and the children reveals that they have their "names written in the land"—which means they are committed to the prairie through good times and bad. However, Anna worries that the trials may defeat Sarah. When the water becomes dangerously scarce, Jacob sends Sarah, Anna, and Caleb to Maine to stay with Sarah’s family; Anna’s worries deepen. She can see Sarah loves the ocean, and why wouldn’t she? The summer drags on, and finally Jacob comes to Maine to retrieve his family; rain has come to the prairie. Sarah reveals that in the spring she will have a new baby. Upon arriving home, Sarah takes a stick and writes her name in the prairie dirt.

Masterfully written excepts from Anna’s diary are interspersed throughout the book; MacLachlan’s choice of words is exceptional. The story is touching, yet it portrays a family’s struggle against nature and Anna’s concern about Sarah’s commitment to the family. The happily ever after ending of the first book coupled with the trials the family faced in this book, show the reader that even happily ever after is not without hardships. The family relationships illustrate a tender, caring unit; Sarah’s family accepts Anna and Caleb with open arms. Younger readers will enjoy the sequel as much as they enjoyed *Sarah, Plain and Tall.*

★★★★


* 5+ NF Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

From the beginning of the Civil War, black Americans were eager to join the ranks of the Union Troops to further the cause of outlawed slavery. The war department, however, rejected their offers, contending the war was not about ending slavery but rather about saving the Union. As the war progressed, the war department realized that blacks could do much more than work as servants or cooks. On January 1, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, believing that freeing the slaves was the best way to undermine the Confederates and assure a Union victory. A call was made for black men, freed or slaves, to enlist in the Union Army. Despite discrimination, lack of training and other hardships, the black troops excelled
in battle. One white captain explained, "I never saw a braver company of men in my life.” The black troops played a significant role in the Union victory. The experience of fighting for their very freedom laid the groundwork for future fights against racial discrimination and injustice.

The book contains many vintage photographs and illustrations that are very moving and educational. First-person accounts are included in the narrative; they are insightful and stirring. The book contains a helpful glossary and index. The research for this book included several hundred sources; a selected bibliography is included. The information is accurate and powerful. The book is a must for every school library; it gives a new perspective on the Civil War.


Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

*Kildee House* was a Newbery Honor book in 1950. It has been out of print and Walker and Company have begun offering a selection of these Newbery books each year.

Jerome Kildee retires from his job as a stone carver, buys a bit of land in a redwood forest in California, and builds a simple house up against a giant redwood tree. He intends to retire from society, too, since he has always been shy around people. The Eppy’s youngest daughter from down the hill has other ideas. Jerome gets along well with the animals in the forest, sharing his cabin with a raccoon family, the space in the walls with the mice, and the crawl space underneath the floor with a family of spotted skunks. Emma Lou Eppy comes often to help him take care of the animals. One day Donald from the other side of the hill comes through with his dog, and the dog kills the mother raccoon. Donald and Emma Lou are instant enemies. Jerome and Emma Lou bury the mama and Jerome retrieves his tools from the wall of the fireplace to carve a headstone for her. He finds he has missed his skill after all and he begins to carve again—but only things he wants to carve. He and Emma Lou take over raising the baby raccoons. Eventually the skunk babies and the raccoon babies grow up and bring home their mates and begin to raise families of their own, much to the dismay of Jerome, who counts twenty-five raccoons and thirty skunks.

Donald has been coming up whenever Emma Lou isn’t around. He wants to make amends for his part in killing the mother raccoon. The three of them try to find a way to solve Jerome’s population problem. Donald comes up with a plan. He has his dad put an ad in half a dozen sporting magazines: "anyone who would pay the shipping charges on a pair of raccoons or a pair of spotted...
skunks could have a pair with young ones. I said we were only interested in people who wanted to replenish the wildlife of their region.” The plan works. Jerome doesn’t get crowded out of his cabin and Donald and Emma Lou become friends.

This is a quiet story about a time which will never come again. No one could afford to retire on a hilltop on the coast of California and they probably wouldn’t be allowed to build a house against a tree if they could afford to. Quite likely there is a law against transporting animals, too. But it is very pleasant to visit that world and contemplate a simpler life. I do not know if today’s children would like that much quiet in their books, but I hope so.

★★★★★


A Pre-3 NF PB Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

"Those dinosaurs! How big were they?" This is the question posed and answered by Bernard Most in his seventh book about dinosaurs. Dinosaurs are compared to such familiar objects as a school bus, bowling alley, and trombone. The pronunciation of each dinosaur’s name is included to aid the reader.

The illustrations support the text in demonstrating dinosaur size as compared to common objects. One dinosaur is so large that a fold out page was created. However, the dinosaurs are not realistically drawn; the figures almost seem like cartoons. Notwithstanding, they may have added appeal to certain readers. The information is valuable and accurate; the author cites five different sources. The topic alone will draw children to the book. It is a needed addition to elementary school libraries.

★★★★★


* 5+ PT Reviewed by Rachael Williams

*Celebrate America* is a magnificent compilation of masterpieces of American art and poetry. Included are works by poets from a wide variety of periods, peoples, and places. Each poem is illustrated by a well-chosen work of visual art from the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American Art. The book is divided into five sections. The first section includes awe-inspiring works which give a view of America’s history of struggle for freedom.
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and equality. The last portrays the many tempos of everyday life, past and present.

Panzer's book is not only a celebration of America; it also offers some needed criticism. Several poems give voice to ethnic groups who have traditionally been ignored. Others voice concern with the rapid rate of industrialization and expansion. However, the overriding tone of the book is a celebration of strength, beauty, and diversity. Although fifth graders would be capable of reading the book, they would have trouble understanding some of the poetry, as it was not originally written for children. The message of *Celebrate America* is important though, and it would be a wonderful book to discuss in the home or classroom.

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B+ 5+ FIReviewed by Gabi Kupitz

On his fourteenth birthday, June 13, 1848, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Francis Alphonse Tucket receives a Lancaster rifle from his Oregon-bound parents. Francis occupies his day shooting buffalo chips, never realizing that he is falling further and further behind the wagon train until he is nabbed by the Pawnee, who transport him to their camp and eventually to the Black Hills. It is here that Francis meets Mr. Jason Grimes, the one-armed white man who trades with the Indians.

Mr. Grimes helps Francis escape from the Pawnee. He also tutors Francis in the ways of the frontier and day-to-day survival. Together, the two form a bond of mutual respect and trust. When Mr. Grimes' friends, trading post owner Spot Johnnie and his family, are killed by the Pawnee, Mr. Grimes goes on a warpath of his own. Realizing that the rules of the frontier that enable the Indians and Mr. Grimes to survive are not the rules he wants to be governed by, Francis parts company with his mentor and heads for Oregon alone.

Fans of Gary Paulsen will enjoy this book. The writing doesn't lag for a moment and a reluctant fifteen-year-old male reader thought enough of this book to write a book report! A recommended read for pre-gang kids: Francis has enough courage to part company with one who has taught him so much and to whom he owes his life, but whose rules of conduct run counter to his own. Coming summer 1995: *Call Me Francis Tucket*.

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A- 9+ FI

Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Mandy Chandler feels there is something strange about the orphan girl Abby. When Mandy’s parents decide to take Abby in, Mandy is adamantly opposed—though she hardly knows why. She can’t figure out why Abby steals food from the cafeteria and why she is so nasty to people who want to be her friends. Most puzzling of all are Abby’s weird disappearances. Only Miranda seems to hear the wild, tragic sobbing coming from Abby’s room. What is going on?

What is going on is another great ghost story from Kathryn Reiss. This is a sequel to her book *The Ghost of Mercy Manor*, which is on this year’s Utah Children’s Book Award Nominee List. Miranda has grown up a bit, is in high school, and is developing her friendship with Dan into a romantic relationship that is sweet and comfortable. But she is plagued by the sense that all is not as it should be where Abby is concerned, and thus commences a satisfying ghost tale. The plot is engrossing, and the narrative carries the reader along. The end bogs down a bit, and for a high school audience the romance might be a little too effortless, but I enjoyed this book for the most part.

★★★★


A- 3-6 NF

Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Astronaut Sally Ride and science teacher Tam O’Shaughnessy combine Ride’s space flight adventures, spectacular photographs from space, and earth science facts into an engaging look at our planet. The use of black pages and white print intensify the feeling that this book is a guided tour of earth from space.

The author’s credentials are beyond reproach; however, no bibliography or suggested reading is included. The brief index has only fifty-seven entries. Clearly, this book is intended as an overview of earth science; its narrative style is informative, but the format limits its use as a reference source. Most school and public libraries will want this book in their collections; almost any child (or adult) will be compelled to keep turning its pages once the book has been opened.

Eggbert is an artist. He often paints wonderful pictures for his friends in the refrigerator. But one day, he is found to be slightly cracked and must leave his home—cracked eggs are not allowed to stay. Eggbert tries to change himself to fit his surroundings, but nothing helps him fit in. Only when he decides to be himself is he able to find true happiness.

This simple story has some profound messages about individuality and being proud of who you are. It is illustrated in bright colors in a sort of sophisticated cartoon style. The pictures tell the story ably. I liked this book.


Heiress Spedden chronicles the travels of her family through the eyes of Polar, her son’s much-loved Steiff bear. The Speddens were a wealthy American family who spent much of their time traveling the world. The journal, which was a Christmas present for Spedden’s eight-year-old son Douglas in 1913, was recently discovered in a family trunk in an attic. Polar’s story has been combined with family photographs, old postcards, and watercolor
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illustrations to present an intriguing look at the pre-jet set life of Edwardian aristocrats. The account ends with the family’s rescue from the sinking Titanic.

The love emotions of a mother for her son is evident in this personal narrative. The reader becomes part of the Spedden family, experiencing not only their lavish adventures but the quiet familial security of a young boy who is surrounded by people who love him. A good choice for reading aloud. This firsthand account of the sinking of the Titanic will add interest to any history class on the topic.


A 5+ FI

Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Twelve-year-old Megin and her fourteen-year-old brother Greg are not even close to being friends. Greg is neat and Megin is messy. They fight for the affection of their little brother. Mother is struggling to "survive"; she even resorts to self-hypnosis. Megin loves hockey but not the new girl from California all her friends are impressed with. Greg has been working on his muscles all summer to impress Jennifer . . . but she has moved to a neighboring town. The two siblings live comically explosive parallel lives until Megin (somewhat accidentally) destroys the egg "baby" that Greg and Sara are assigned to parent and Greg retaliates by throwing Megin’s favorite hockey stick into the thin-ice part of the lake. Megin’s despair is intensified when she learns her foster grandmother at the nursing home has died. She’s had enough and wonders around town until late, finally staying in an historic Homestead House near the lake. Greg goes out at night in search of the hockey stick and repentance. He retrieves the stick but breaks through the ice. Megin hears him yelling and saves him. Things calm down at home and Mom gives up her self-hypnosis.

This lively tale is true-to-life and is humorously presented with Spinelli’s traditional skill. The characters mature admirably and not unrealistically. Greg learns to value friends who are present and not moon over a dream. Megin befriends the California girl and an elderly woman and learns to see actual people, not just facades. Brother and sister learn to get along and respect each other’s differences. The book is fun and compelling, and it promotes good values.

Dinosaur Roar is a simple book of opposites written in rhythm. The words are catchy and fun:

"Dinosaur roar, dinosaur squeak,  
dinosaur fierce, dinosaur meek . . ."

The detailed illustrations support the text and are delightful. The dinosaurs are expressive; they seem to have personalities of their own. The last page portrays hungry dinosaurs having dinner. One dinosaur has started to eat the last word in the page: "scrunc...h!" The watercolor blending in the pictures is an interesting technique; it seems fitting for dinosaur skin. The topic of the book is already a favorite with children. With the careful word selection and outstanding illustrations, the book is a must!


A 2-5 NF

Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

Is there an American child who has not been touched by the writing of Dr. Seuss? Most children have been introduced to *The Cat in the Hat* or thought about eating *Green Eggs and Ham*. Theodor Seuss Geisel, who was called Ted, wrote and illustrated forty-eight books, which together sold more than two hundred million copies. *Oh, the Places He Went* is the story of his life. As a child, Ted lived six blocks from the zoo. He loved to visit and would draw the animals when he returned. However, they didn't look exactly like those at the zoo; one of his beasts, a WYNNMPH, had ears three yards long! In time his father ran the zoo. This of course makes us think of one of Dr. Seuss' books. Ted attended school, then struggled as a writer and artist. He began signing his name Dr. Seuss to make his work seem more important. He was saving his real name for the great novel he hoped to write someday. He told his friends he had saved his father thousands of dollars by becoming a doctor without going to medical school. Little-known incidents that motivated him to write are revealed in the text. For example, *Green Eggs and Ham* came about because an editor bet Ted fifty dollars he couldn't write a book using only fifty simple words. His amusing, childlike personality is revealed as his life story is told.

The information is very interesting. Numerous primary and secondary sources are given in the bibliography. The pencil illustrations support the text and are entertaining. Dr. Seuss' wit and humor will have special appeal to young readers. The book is a good introduction to authors and their struggle to write.

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Reviewed by Jan Porter

Grannies come in all sizes and shapes. They come in a variety of colors and like to do different things. Some have bristly chins, while others have soft laps and wobbly bottoms. Their jobs and interests vary. Some aren't married; others have been married many times. Grannies sometimes wear funny clothing and do funny things. But no matter what, each granny is one of a kind.

This humorous celebration of grannies is delightfully illustrated in pencil and watercolor, sometimes with an aerial point of view. *Our Granny* provides an entertaining and effective way to teach tolerance and understanding of the elderly as well as an appreciation of diversity. While written for young children ages 4-7, it will be enjoyed by grandchildren of all ages, and even by grannies themselves!

A Pre-S PB Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Part of the Keiki’s First Books series, these five small board books introduce infants to the five senses through things found in Hawaii. Hear “rustling bamboo, geckos at night.” See “fields of pineapple and sugarcane.” Smell “pikake, ginger, maile lei.” Taste “mangoes, kim chee, rock salt plum.” Touch “smooth pebbles” and “rough lava.”

Bold illustrations of wide-eyed, happy children exploring their senses emphasize the cultural diversity of Hawaii. Faces are Hawaiian, Asian, Black, and Caucasian. The books are the right size for little hands and will stand up to many readings. For libraries that serve multicultural communities, these books will appeal to a wide variety of parents and infants. Many parents, especially those with roots in Hawaii, will want these books in their homes because they affirm cultural diversity.


* 10-12 FI Reviewed by Janet Francis

Shanna, Sylvia, and Rebecca have grown up hearing their grandmother Gemma’s story of Sleeping Beauty over and over, always in the same words, always with the same mysterious feeling that somehow it is Gemma’s story. As the two older girls grow up, the story loses its magic, and Gemma is someone to be slightly ashamed of (but with caution!). To Rebecca, whose face could be Gemma’s young face and whose heart is tied in some special way to Gemma’s, the story never loses its magic. When Gemma dies and leaves as her only legacy a box of old papers, Rebecca feels compelled to find out who Gemma really was.

Her quest takes her to Poland and finally to the small village of Chelmno, a suffering memorial to the reality of horror, where 320,000 people were gassed in vans and tossed into open trenches by the Nazis. Here Rebecca discovers the stark reality of Gemma’s ‘fairy tale’ and perceives the truths that lie glittering beneath all fairy tales.
Briar Rose is one of the volumes in The Fairy Tale Series, a collection of updated classics with new approaches. Some of Robin McKinley’s works are also included in the series. Although the subject matter of Yolen’s book is delicate and adult in nature, the reality of the characters and the events which shaped them are universal, and the emotional impact of the action of the book will leave no room for belief that there was no holocaust. Young adult books written with this kind of skill can help to bridge the gap that occurs when high school readers can’t find anything to read except books on the bestseller list.

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