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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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Helen Hoopes, Rachael Williams, Karen Newmeyer, Nancy C. Evensen, Gabi Kupitz, Marsha D. Broadway, Bonnie Walker, Sandra L. Tidwell, Marlene Mabey, Leah Hanson, Denise Swift, Donna J. Jorgensen, Vicky M. Turner, and Suzanne Olsen

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol16/iss2/4

**A 6+ PB BI**

Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

It seems strange to find a book about the Holocaust and its victims in the picture book category, but that is precisely what *Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust* is. However, this is not an ordinary picture book. It is the story of two real children who actually were victims of this terrible event in world history. "Hilde" is Hilde Rosenzweig who was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1923. "Eli" is Eli Lax, born in Zarich, Czechoslovakia in 1932. At no time in the book do the two meet, but Adler and Ritz make these children live through their words and illustrations.

We see Hilde as she interacts with her family and friends. We learn of when the economy fell apart in Germany and Hitler came to power; but because she is a child, no changes come immediately into Hilde’s life. Adler introduces Hitler and the Nazi party to the young reader through the events of May 10, 1933, when "books written by Jews were thrown into the streets and burned." We learn that Hilde was a witness to the *Kristallnacht* when the Nazis raided the city and, among other things, broke all the glass. In 1939, Hilde’s brother gets a visa to England, but Hilde is left behind.

Eli Lax also was persecuted because he was Jew. His father was a rabbi, and Eli was a good student. His older sister who had already immigrated to the United States tried to get the "necessary papers" so that the family could come to America; but before this was accomplished, the Germans invaded Eli’s part of Czechoslovakia and they became trapped.

Through pictures and the written word, the events that transpired in the life of each child are recorded. There are facts and numbers and details, much of which will not be comprehensible to a young child, but for those who are a little older, this is an excellent, accurate introduction to the Holocaust.

★★★★★

Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Finally we find a use for those pesky new babies in the house. Rodney hates monsters; in fact, they scare him nearly to death. But, he can count on finding one in his room each night before he goes to sleep. Mom and Dad try to help by clearing anything smelly, sticky, or strangely shaped from his room. Still, the monsters come. Then Rodney learns that a baby is on the way, and from different people’s description of what he will look like, Rodney is sure that baby will be a monster that will permanently live at their house. When the baby comes, however, he is not what Rodney is expecting, and Rodney decides to protect him from the monsters that lurk in the house. Readers will discover an utterly surprising ending.

Auch has done an excellent job of dealing with fear—particularly, the childhood fears of monsters and what changes a new baby will bring to the home. The pictures and the surprise ending make the book even more worthwhile.


Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

*The Barn* is written in the voice of nine-year-old Ben, who is being called home from boarding school to help care for his father who has had a stroke. Mother died the year before, and his older brother and sister are struggling to keep up the farm. Ben adopts the task of caring for his father alone, while Harrison and Nettie plow and plant because they are stronger and the land must come first. Father had been talking about building a proper barn before his illness. He can’t talk at all now, but Ben teaches him to communicate by blinking. Now Ben is determined that they must build the barn for him.

After all the other work is done, the three work on the barn. The project becomes a race against time as their father slowly wastes away. Yet just before the barn is finished, Father has another stroke and dies the morning the barn is completed. Ben realizes there are many gifts given and received with the building of the barn. "There it was, then: a choice. Did I build the barn for myself? Did we build it for Father? Or did Father get me to build it for us all? Or was it all three at once?" Avi has carefully crafted a beautiful, simple story, full of depth as well as a sense of adventure and mystery. A fine contribution to children’s literature.
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B 2-5 FI Reviewed by Denise Swift

Oh no, a substitute teacher! To make matters worse, the principal asks Simon and Becky to "befriend" the substitute and make sure he has a good day with their class. Simon and Becky agree to help out, but aren't sure they will be able to do this. They soon find out that the substitute, Mr. Merlin, doesn't need any help. The students wonder if he is the "Mr. Merlin" they have read about in books, and while the rest of the class goes out to recess, Simon and Becky find out for sure. Mr. Merlin takes them on an adventure to a castle where the children get to live their fantasies. Simon becomes a magical wizard and Becky conquers a monster.

This fast-reading, magical book which will interest children who like knights, castles, and using their imagination. An added benefit of the book is being able to read more about Merlin the Magician and his magical ways.

★★★★


A K-3 FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

The Widow Noodle and her family must take their father's puppet wagon and try to make a living for themselves now that he has been killed. They have waited as long as they dare, and must begin traveling the country, putting on the shows that he used to do. Gideon, the oldest child, toured with his father and knows the secrets of creating the illusions. Celinda is unhappy being the youngest and being assigned all the baby jobs, such as opening and closing the curtains. She wants to operate one of the puppets. The best and most complicated puppet looks like George Washington. When the Noodles have to use him to pay a bill, they have to come up with a plan to get him back for the big show at the Governor's Mansion.

This story is a lighthearted look at the way people lived, worked, and played in the early days of our country. Just a fun read.

★★★★
Robin Hood and his merry men living in the heart of the Sherwood Forest, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor . . . . Whether it’s Disney’s clever fox, Kevin Costner, or a hero from a picture book, the legend of Robin Hood seems to hold us all spellbound. Now, in Monica Furlong’s novel, the legend of Robin Hood becomes very real to young readers, as it is told through the eyes of a young, mute boy, Dummy. After a terrible whipping, Dummy runs away from his cruel master and blindly stumbles upon the kingdom of Robin Hood in the heart of Sherwood Forest. At first, this small, silent boy is regarded with suspicion—many wonder if he is a spy for Robin’s enemies. Gradually, however, he wins the friendship and trust of Robin Hood and others. And once he gains this trust, Dummy accepts the heavy responsibility of helping and protecting Robin Hood. Throughout the novel, Dummy struggles in his attempts to speak, to remember a past that he has blocked out in his mind, to win the trust of Maid Marian, and to keep Robin Hood from being killed by enemies. The novel closes with a suspenseful showdown between the Merry Men and the forces of the tyrannical Prince John. And in the midst of the tense fighting, Dummy finally discovers his true identity.

Furlong’s novel is an enjoyable version of the Robin Hood legend. She includes many well-known and loved characters and gives them a human quality that all readers will be able to relate to. Robin Hood is especially endearing with his love for helping others and his sense of mischief. The mystery of Dummy’s identity and odd silence also adds an interesting twist to the familiar story. Furlong’s novel will spin its magic over anyone who, in their hearts, still believes in Robin Hood.


Have you ever wondered what you would use for a flashlight or what school would be like as a pioneer? Have you wondered what games you would play, what chores you would have, or how food was stored without refrigerators? Barbara Greenwood has researched and documented the life of a pioneer family in 1840. *A Pioneer Sampler* shares early settler life through
the telling of the life of the Robertson family. The reader experiences maple sugaring times, house raising, school days, visiting a general store, family activities, and working with the Robertsons. The family and readers also have the fun times of cornhusking bees, Christmas celebrations, and visits by the traveling peddler.

Greenwood shares a great amount of information through the story line of the daily events of the Robertson family, as well as sections explaining how things were done, such as moving stumps and boulders from fields, keeping time, storing food, harvesting crops, and making shoes. The reader will be amazed by how much he learns as he reads. There are many detailed illustrations which add to the explanations and enjoyment of the book.

If you have a question about pioneer life, pick up *A Pioneer Sampler* to find the answer.

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**A 5+ NF BI**

Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

Readers of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and other Bronte books will want to read this biography which explains the early talents and experiences which inspired the literary masterpieces of the Bronte sisters. Guzzetti points out that the name 'Bronte' is Greek for 'thunder' and relates the hard life of the Bronte family. The children, five daughters (Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Emily, Anne) and a son (Branwell) ranged from eighteen months to seven years when their mother Maria died. Aunt Branwell came to help Patrick Bronte raise the children, but Maria, the oldest daughter, did most of the mothering. Sickness and disease were prevalent in England in the early 1800s, and Maria and Elizabeth died at ages twelve and ten.

"Words of all kinds were of the utmost importance in the children's lives," relates the author. "Reading, writing, and the sharing of feelings and thoughts" helped them recover from their many experiences with tragedy. The children's earliest writings were inspired by a gift from their father, a toy village and a box of twelve wooden soldiers. The "Twelves" were the main characters in their hand-stitched postage-stamp-sized volumes about the imaginary kingdom of Glasstown.

The text is full of interesting details about the children's experiences at home, at boarding schools and their early writing experiences. Photographs and drawings of the Bronte family and of the Haworth, England area from the Bronte Parsonage Museum highlight the text. Other features of the book include
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a map of the United Kingdom with important Bronte places indicated, selected poems, chronology, bibliography, sources of illustrations and index.


Reviewed by Bonnie Walker

Action jumps out of every page as months are depicted and celebrated by short alliterative phrases and colorful cut-out figures and scenes. Where appropriate, the background coincides with the seasons. Captions ranging from "Follow a Fox in February" to "Do a Dance in December" are creatively portrayed by pictures of lively children performing. Halsey has made a positive, fun way to learn the months in this early concept book. The artist has made the people, animals, and scenery three-dimensional.

For parents and teachers, this book would be an asset to learning. Acting out the suggested scenarios would provide vigor to the absorption of facts, a much needed ploy at early ages.


Reviewed by Bonnie Walker

The tradition of the Choctaw people is vividly recounted in *How Thunder and Lightening Came to Be*. The Great Sun Father assigns Heloha and Melatha, husband and wife birds, to figure out how to warn his people of impending wind and rain. Heloha is large and slow, while Melatha, the husband, is thin and very, very fast. Both are silly and not very smart. After two failed attempts, Heloha decides it's time to lay eggs. A near accident with the eggs unexpectedly solves the problem, and the Sun Father is pleased. The personalities of the birds are endearing and are helped by the colorful collages on every page. Harrell, a Choctaw herself, has combined the oral stories of her aunt, grandfather, and mother to make a detailed rendition of this ancient tale. This story is mentioned briefly in a collection of social and ceremonial life of the Choctaw tribe, documenting the authenticity of the tale independent of the oral tradition.

Harrell makes an active, enjoyable account of this traditional legend. Young children will find it a humorous and different slant on thunder and
lightening. Educators could use it along with scientific background for studying this phenomenon or for studying different Indian tribes, their legends, and way of life.


* All PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Nell and her two sisters live with their father high in the tops of the Smokey Mountains. Even though they are poor, Nell’s sisters always expect rich presents from their father when he ventures into town. Nell, however, asks only for simple things. When her father sees a Christmas rose blooming in the snow, he knows it will be the perfect present for his little Nell. Because this is a Beauty and the Beast/Cinderella story, a large white bear comes to claim the person who picked the rose. Nell unselfishly goes because it was her present. And we all know pretty much know how the rest of the story goes.

In a recent article concerning recent children’s books, the author critically declared "Refried folklore to the left of them. Half-baked fakelore to the right of them. And, enough pettable, nonrabid creatures to populate a Disney film." May I ask what is wrong with refrying a folktale? May I also ask what is wrong with nicely done illustrations? This book is a case in point. Don’t pass it by!!!


* All NF Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Each year students have school assignments about animals— covering every aspect of a specific animal (genus, species, colors, height, weight, respiratory systems, skeletons, and so on). The students need as many pictures as they can find to illustrate their reports. When I saw this book in a local book store, I knew it was a must. Not only does it strikingly portray the skeletal system (rich golds and tans on velvety black), but the book also gives quite a bit of detail about other aspects of the animal's life. One shortcoming is that more animals are not detailed. Only eighteen are featured in the book: cod, frog, green
tortoise, Nile crocodile, pit viper, scarlet macaw, cape penguin, red kangaroo, fruit bat, lion, elephant seal, blue whale, African elephant, moose, horse, three-toed sloth, gorilla, and finally, human.

One small corner of each large page also shows the size comparison between man and the particular animal. Running along the top of each page, the movements of the animal as it walks, swims, or flies are shown. The book also contains an index and glossary that includes a picture of a lion with its bones separated, so that each individual bone can be seen clearly.

The book is published in trade binding and may need some reinforcement to withstand the treatment it will get in a library.


Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Parr Burrman, 16, tells the story of his 18-year-old sister Evie, who falls in love with banker Duff’s daughter in a rural farming community in Missouri. Dad hopes Evie will take over the farm; Mom tries to make Evie more feminine; Parr wants Evie to marry Cord; and Evie eventually flees to New York City, where she is met by Patsy Duff. This book deals honestly with growing up, questioning family traditions and values, and holding on to family as children become adults.

As usual, Kerr, the 1993 winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for her lifetime contribution to young adult literature, does not preach but presents a riveting story and allows readers to apply their own values. Both Parr and Evie face some unpleasant consequences of their actions, but there is hope that although the future will not be as the parents had envisioned, the family will continue to support one another. The lesbian relationship is not sensationalized, but some readers, as did Evie’s family, will find it upsetting and difficult to deal with. This book should be considered for young adult library collections.


Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

Kuskin repeats a common theme of hers in a well-used form, that of sounds in poetry. But this is a poem with a difference. A child picks up an old
tin can and holds it to her ear like a conch shell, but with facial features, it "speaks" to her. The ruckus of the city, its people and animals all come forth to show the flavor of a city life. The poetry is loose, almost free association, with onomatopoeia, rhythm, and some rhyme. The pictures are abstract, surrealistic, in strong secondary colors (oranges, purples, greens) and black. Objects have faces, people have animal heads and animals have people heads. Buildings have fluid lines and three dimensions, while people and creatures are stiff, with two dimensions. The energy and action builds until the last pages are full of figures crowding and filling the illustrations with no clear focal points or direction.

I question the appropriateness of using such an extreme and symbolic artistic style to illustrate a children's book. The pictures demonstrate the chaos of city life, but do little to make that life comprehensible to a young mind. There is little in the book that would be recognizable to a child. I asked my second-grader's opinion of the book. She said, "It was weird." When I asked her if it was good-weird or bad-weird, she said, "I don't know" with a very puzzled sound to her voice. I say go with the body language. If a person doesn't know if they like something, they don't.

★★★★


A K-5 FI Reviewed by Bonnie Walker

Cloud Eyes, an Indian dreamer, weaves a legend of bears, honey, and reclamation. The last one of his tribe to remember the taste of the bees' honey, he desires to have it for all. His abilities of understanding and listening to the language of the animals provides knowledge to change the situation for mankind.

In a gentle, descriptive way Lasky spins the tale with forest, bears and scenes feeling real and possible. Moser's illustrations are done with black and shades of grey to white. They give a depth and wholeness to the legend. How Cloud Eyes wins over the bears is a rich story.

Boys would especially be moved by this tale of the outdoors and bears. The killing of a bear, though handled momentarily and well, may lead to a discussion. Teachers and parents need to be aware and prepared. The impossibility of "dancing with the bears" is a dream of rich dimensions, a good starting point for dreaming, thinking of kindness to animals, and closeness to nature. I would recommend it for its art and warmth. It makes a good starting point for many fields of study.

★★★★
Illustrations by Ruth Heller reprinted by permission of Grosset & Dunlap from MERRY-GO-ROUND, copyright ©1990 by Ruth Heller.

A 5+ FI PB  

Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

*The Man Who Knew Too Much* tells of a woman who, while working in the fields, watches an eagle swoop down to comfort her crying child, and of her husband who doesn’t believe the wondrous event. Lester retells in rich, expressive language this Zambian tale which explains how murder came into the world. The oil paintings by Jenkins are beautifully done. The figures are especially realistic, which heightens the effect of the story’s tragic ending.

I have thought a lot about this story since reading it and have shared it with my husband and children. It is different from most picture books. It requires, because of its ending, that the reader discuss the story afterwards. The 'Notes on the Story' found at the end of the book would be very useful for this discussion. The author intended, according to these notes, to provide:

... an opportunity for adults to consider those times when a child has felt 'killed' when an adult did something that took away the child's sense of wonder and marvel in an experience. The tale provides an opportunity to talk about the importance of keeping some experiences secret; to talk about the 'marvels' in everyday life.

How quick we are to squelch the new ideas that we hear because we "know too much." Adults may think that a child's dream or goal is unattainable, that a new idea is not logical. In reality, however, the acceptance of 'marvels' leads to further discovery and enlightenment.

Use this book to introduce a creative art, science or literature project at school or to start a discussion of parent/child relationships at home. It has an obvious use as part of a unit on folk tales. All ages from upper elementary on could benefit from reading and discussing this moral tale. It has a vital message for our "let me see it or experience it and then I'll believe" society.

✦✦✦✦


A Pre-2 FI PB  

Reviewed by Denise Swift

One day Flicka, Ricka, and Dicka's mother gives them each a new dress. They run off to play, with the advice from their mother to keep their new
dresses clean. After playing, they help an old woman carry her wood. When they reach her house, they find out that she needs more help. They bring water, feed the chickens, feed and milk the cow, and chase the pig. Their dresses get very dirty, and on the way home Ricka tears her dress on a fence. Their mother is very worried about the girls and is glad to see them come home. They explain to her what they were doing. The mother is glad they helped the woman but asks them to wear overalls the next time they help someone.

When this book was first published it was okay to help a stranger and go to their home and help out. Today, children are advised to stay away from strangers. This book could be a starting point to talk about safe ways of helping others. The Flicka, Ricka, and Dicka books are delightful to read because they are so simple and carefree.


Flicka, Ricka, and Dicka offer to take care of Aunt Helga and Uncle Jon’s cat, Mitzi. One morning Mitzi runs out the door and is chased up a tree by a dog. The girls try all day to get the cat down. When they go home for supper, Mitzi is still in the tree. The next day they can only find Mitzi. Aunt Helga and Uncle Jon come home to three crying girls and Aunt Helga knows right away where the cat is. They look inside the house in a special basket and find not only Mitzi but three new kittens. The girls become very attached to the kittens and a few weeks later, Uncle Jon and Aunt Helga give each girl a kitten for her birthday.

Young girls can relate to the Flicka, Ricka, & Dicka series. The sisters have a responsibility to take care of the cat but it seems that they fail. The story describes all the effort they make to try to keep their promise, and in the end everything works out. The girls seem to have fun, realistic adventures which help readers imagine they are one of the girls.

Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

The fragile life of beautiful red poppies serves as a backdrop for the miracle of plant survival. Lush paintings and an almost reverent text chronicle the life cycle of this wild flower. Without delving into any technical detail, the paintings and text explain the functions of the pistil, stamens, pollen, seeds, other plant parts, environmental forces, and neighbors. There isn’t much in these paintings that is not explained in the text or in the "End Notes." Both the author and translator have done a remarkable job of capturing the complexity of life in artistic simplicity.


Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

When the McTavishes were married they "counted their money and talked things over seriously. We can afford either a wonderful, speedy car that never breaks down, or we can have lots of children." They decide to compromise and have a rattlebang car and seven children. It is in this old rattlebang that they decide to picnic on Mount Fogg. They stop at the hot springs on the way to the top and swim and eat their lunch. Granny always brings pizza but they can never eat it because it is too hard to even break. Suddenly Mount Fogg explodes and lava is flowing toward them. Old rattlebang has a flat tire but Granny’s pizza saves the day and substitutes for the tire.

Margaret Mahy’s zany story would be much less without the humorously expressive illustrations of Steven Kellogg. Only in the pictures do shark’s teeth break on Granny’s tossed out pizza, and children swim "up and down" (vertically) in the hot springs. Only in the illustrations do we watch the alarmed eagles flying to escape the volcano, and families watching from the overlook with their pet hippo. The illustrations make this book one children will enjoy.

A Pre-2 PB Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

Preston, a young pig, continues to escape a wolf’s efforts to capture and eat him. Each time the trap is set, SUDDENLY the unexpected occurs. The wolf is creative and persistent, while Preston is oblivious and endearing. The story ends with Preston confiding to his mother that he feels someone has been following him. His mother suspiciously looks as though she could be someone else in disguise. She turns around and gives him a big hug.

SUDDENLY is a predictable book sure to delight young readers. It won’t be long before children will join in the reading of "SUDDENLY" with each situation. The watercolor illustrations are simple, yet expressive. The end pages are particularly clever. The front features Preston ambling along a sidewalk with the shadow of a large wolf looming overhead and a bird warning, "He’s behind you!" The end page shows the wolf being carried off in a stretcher to a wolf hospital. The author has published several children’s books in England where he was awarded the Emil/Kurt Maschler Award. SUDDENLY is certainly worth some attention.

★★★★


A 4-9 NF BI Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

The life of NBA Golden State Warrior player and 1992 Olympic Dream Team player, Chris Mullin, is the subject of this biography. Mullin’s life is a good example of the years of commitment and training necessary for a basketball player to perform at such a high level of proficiency.

Many color and black and white photographs accompany the text, which tells of family life with his parents and four brothers and one sister, people who were important to him as he grew up, and his experiences with sports from the age of seven. I was interested to read of Chris’s successful fight with alcoholism. In addition to providing good reading material for boys and girls whose prime interest is sports, this could be included as background material for the study of drug abuse.

★★★★

Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

In Korea in the early twentieth century, a girl was not considered worthy to receive an education. A few pioneers were determined to change that. Imduk Puk was not born a boy and after her father and brother died in an epidemic, she and her mother were expected to become dependent on another male. Her mother would not submit. She determined her daughter would be educated. At eight years of age all boys could go to school, so Mother decided her daughter would have to be a girl-son. Her name was changed from Imduk, meaning "virtuous woman," to Induk, meaning "benevolent," a name acceptable for both boys and girls. For a year Induk went to school and played as a boy. Her mother then found the Samsung Methodist Mission School for Girls in another village. Together they walked to the school, but that was the last time for many years they would be together. Mother could not live independently in the village. She became a peddler to support her daughter, and nine-year-old Induk lived in a room by herself and cooked and cared for herself alone.

Mother turned and began the trek down the hill, but I stood perfectly still. I wanted to go to school, but not this badly! I’d rather carry water, like the girl we had seen earlier, than live alone! How I wanted to cry, to beg her to change her mind, but a child must not be so bold. I know, too, that my mother was a very determined woman. I could not have changed her mind even if I had been permitted to speak to her about her decision.

Induk had a hard time understanding why school was important enough to keep her separated from her mother, but she was later very grateful for her mother’s determination that she would be educated.

This book is based on the true story of Induk Puk who was one of the first female graduates of a Korean University. In her adult life she worked hard to start schools in Korea. It is an excellent story of a brave, determined girl and her mother. Throughout the book, we are instructed in Korean culture in a very unobtrusive and pleasant way. An epilogue details the events of her life until her death in 1980. Also included is an appendix explaining the "signs" one may be born under and a chart to determine your hour, day, month, and year signs. A bibliography is on the last page.

••••
Haunted Water is based on an old German fairy tale entitled Undine. Osborne found it to be so "strange and compelling" that she decided to write an entire book based on the mermaid-like main character. She admits that she "departed considerably from the original Undine" but since the original was not readily available, comparison can not be made. This rendition, however, is still "strange and compelling."

Undine is a beautiful young girl who lives with a fisherman and his deranged wife near the sea. Into their lives comes the young Lord Huldbrand, who falls in love with Undine. They are married and return to Lord Huldbrand's castle. But, following them is the faceless demon who first showed himself to Lord Huldbrand when he was still at the fisherman's cottage. Undine has a strange affinity for water: the ocean, the river, the fountain in the courtyard of the castle. She is perpetually wandering off to immerse herself in the water where the demon is also usually found. The demon seems to want Undine to go away with him, and the fight between him and Lord Huldbrand is an on-going theme of the novel. There is romance, terror, struggle, and heartbreak. Unfortunately, the story's ending leaves the reader unsatisfied. Although well-told, this is definitely not the book to read alone on a dark and stormy night!


Young Prince Rakoto of Madagascar is devastated when he is told of his father's death. Rakoto commands the royal doctor and imperial wizard to bring his father back to life. They explain their limitations. In desperation, Prince Rakoto runs to the wise woman to explain the situation. She tells Rakoto a magical Malagasy tale which helps him begin to deal with the death. In the final page Prince Rakoto is seen as a boy who becomes a man. His reign is filled with love and justice as he had been taught by his father.

True to her past, Rappaport's research for the book has been thorough and extensive. The story the wise woman told Rakoto is a well-known Malagasy tale. The stages Rakoto passes through in dealing with the death of his father are based upon the stages of grief as presented in the work of Dr. Elisabeth
Kubler-Ross. The exquisite watercolor illustrations enhance the text. In painting the pictures, the illustrator purchased many costumes from Madagascar for his models to wear, thus ensuring authenticity. The dedication page includes a memorial sculpture made of wood common throughout Madagascar. As a whole, the book is accurate and well done. And, the added benefit of helping young children learn to deal with death makes *The New King* a useful, beautiful addition to any library.


Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

Dian Fossey began her research on mountain gorillas in December of 1966. She found them to be gentle, sociable animals and successfully interacted with them. This selection tells the story of her research of their social behavior and her great efforts to protect the mountain gorillas from poachers and cattle herders.

This is a thorough, intriguing coverage of the life of an amazing woman! Roberts made Dian’s treks into the heavy jungles on the borders of countries such as Rwanda, Zaire and Uganda and her work with gorillas such as Coco, Digit and Pucker come alive. Robert’s text is extensively documented—endnotes, a supplemental bibliography, and index are located at the end of the book. Numerous black and white photographs carry the reader through the introduction, ten chapters, and epilogue. An important book in *The Importance Of Series!*


Reviewed by Marlene Mabey

Koichi Seii is thirteen years-old and determined to become a cartoonist—a great cartoonist. To this end, he locates the famous cartoonist Noro Shinpei in a run-down part of Tokyo. After passing a drawing test, Koichi becomes the apprentice of this master cartoonist. Kiyoi is the name given to the boy by Noro Shinpei. But Master Noro will pass on much more than a nickname to Kiyoi. Kiyoi’s time of apprenticeship will be one of growing independence, self-realization, and a new understanding of the world around him.
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The sights, sounds, and people of post-World War II Tokyo help expand Kiyoi's apprenticeship. Tokida, a fellow apprentice, is involved in political protests. Mr. Kubota, the karate teacher, introduces Kiyoi to a startling and strange side of Tokyo's nightlife. Master Noro develops a special bond with his new apprentice. "Growing up" experiences include drawing classes with nude models, a crush on an unapproachable girl from school, and a surprising camaraderie with another girl. Kiyoi's estranged father also invites him to emigrate to the United States.

The Ink-Keeper's Apprentice is based on Allen Say's own boyhood in Japan. There are many interesting insights to the Japanese culture and heritage woven skillfully into the story. The swiftly moving story keeps the reader turning pages and smiling with satisfaction as the book closes.


Reviewed by Bonnie Walker

The Enchanted Storks tells a tale of Baghdad long ago with its mystery and magic, woven into a story of good triumphing over evil. The well-beloved Calif and his Vizier (prime minister) are tricked into buying a snuff box which, with a given word, changes them into storks. For the adventure of seeing the kingdom from the sky, they change themselves into birds. But when the magic word to change them back doesn't work, they are in a dilemma. Sleeping on one leg; eating grubs, frogs, worms and mice; make for a difficult situation—especially when they discover the Calif's wicked brother taking over the throne. Back in the forest, they discover a woodpecker crying. She communicates to them her plight of being turned into a bird by an evil sorcerer. She takes them to where the sorcerer meets with his magicians, and they discover that the sorcerer is the same man who sold them the snuff box. Eventually, the Calif and vizier find the right magic word, restore themselves to their human form, and break the spell for the princess. With the spell broken, the Calif is restored to his throne; the wicked brother is driven away; peace is restored.

The intricate, lavish pictures by Dianon enhance this tale that is part of Middle Eastern folklore. The back page tells about the story's background and some historical happenings that bring Baghdad up to the present. Pronunciation of Calif and Vizier are included. The pictures themselves are worthwhile viewing, and the story will be enjoyed by the children. Good cultural enlightenment.
NR 9+ FI Reviewed by Karen Newmeyer

Bordertown lies between the real world and faerie world. Gangs of human outcasts and elves roam the streets. Magic, drugs, violence, sex, and rock and roll rule. In this sequel to *Elsewhere*, Ron, now known as Wolfboy, has been transformed into a werewolf by Leda, a powerful elf. Wolfboy learns about love, joins a rock and roll band, helps his friend Strider beat a frame up for murder, and looks out for Florida, a young elf who is disguised to hide the fact that she is the heir to the faerie world. After various adventures and misadventures, Wolfboy has the chance to "get even" with Leda but changes his mind when he makes a surprising discovery.

This book is preoccupied with drugs, sex, and rock and roll. Q Paul, Taz, Sparks, Tick-Tick, King O’Beer are wearisome. Everyone, apparently, adopts a "cool" name when arriving in Bordertown. The story line is really a series of disjointed short stories of life in Bordertown. However, I suspect most kids would enjoy it. It even has some helpful tips on the proper use of a condom. After all, while they may be obsessed with sex, at least the characters practice "safe sex." While the setting for these Bordertown stories is imaginative, this isn’t a book I would recommend.


B 3+ FI Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Mary’s long awaited baby sister Felicity has died of SIDS. In an attempt to help Mary cope and to provide an opportunity for her mother to cope, Mary’s parents have sent her to camp. She finds it difficult to reach out to the other girls at camp but is drawn to Laura, a troubled loner. Mary and Laura find a hunting cabin in the woods and secretly visit it at night. Although Laura has decided to let Mary be her friend, she doesn’t like the other girls and doesn’t want Mary to like them either. Laura finally turns on her and, too late, Mary finds another, better friend, Celeste. Celeste helps Mary to keep Felicity’s memory alive in her heart. When Mary returns home, Felicity’s room has been changed to a guest room.

Smith has developed complex characters but has not let us fully into their hearts. The story is interesting but distant. The distance may serve as a buffer.
for a child who has suffered a similar tragedy, but it does not let the rest of us into Mary’s world deep enough. Otherwise, it is well written.


Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

For a short book, *Hitler’s Reich* covers an amazing amount of information concerning Adolf Hitler and the Reich he masterminded in Germany. The book begins at the onset of Hitler’s extreme dogma as a member of the German Workers’ Party. Stewart endeavors to help the reader understand why the German people so willingly accepted his dictatorship and how such a cataclysmic period in European history ever could occur.

Using pictures and quotes (both from other authors who have written about this part of history and from victims and participants), Stewart has created a book that is both engrossing and repugnant in its descriptions. Although she portrays an accurate image of actual events, only the most mature student should be encouraged to attempt a close study of this book. Don’t misunderstand—Stewart has created an exceptional collection of facts (some little-known) about Hitler; however, the man and times of which she writes are more than shocking to the novice reader. For example, to Hitler, “the plan of exterminating the Jews seemed no more immoral than the process of evolution, the survival of the fittest.”

For the reader who can stomach the likes of the above quote and who wants to learn more about the madman who instigated the cruelty of the Holocaust (and World War II in general), this is an informative, well-written documentary of a cruel, demented man.


Reviewed by Marlene Mabey

In 1852 Susan Darden Carlisle inherited everything—including about two thousand sheep—when her parents were killed in a buggy accident. Along with the sheep, she inherited her father’s huge debt to the unscrupulous G. B. Minzter who owns the local gambling house. Susan schemes to save her estate, and the wild plan takes her from Iowa to...
California on foot with her sheep. Her fourteen years spent in Kanesville, Iowa, have exposed her to the westward movement but not the actual trials and excitement of the trail. Susan, along with her elderly guardian, Indian Myrt, and Drover Bert Pettit plus his crew of herders make the trek across the Great Divide. Susan meets the "first American cowboy," handsome Clay Carmer, who works with Drover, and she decides he is worth every effort of her whole-hearted pursuit. After the "sheep walk" Susan has to bring her cash fortune back to Iowa by way of the Isthmus of Panama. Despite all of her incredible efforts, Susan misses the court-made deadline for paying her debt and Minzter gets her estate. Yet her tale still does not end. She has kept in contact with Clay Carmer and sets out to meet him after she pays one last call on G. B. Minzter.

This fast moving historical novel is told alternately from the point of view of Susan and Clay Carmer. Taylor has obviously researched about the time and place in which Susan lived. The story is laced with real historical figures and fascinating facts that capture the thrilling adventure of the times. Any reader who wants a spirited page-turning tale of adventure should pick up Walking Up A Rainbow and enjoy.


Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

The year 1299 is finally over. The end of the world did not come as predicted by Doomsdayers, but for fourteen year-old Elenor of Ramsay, betrothed to the older Thomas of Thornham, who has been on the Crusades for the past eight years, 1300 is a year of dread for her in England. Elenor is an orphan. Her betrothal to Thomas was a "conspiracy of papas." She dreads bearing children for fear that she will die in childbirth as was her mother’s fate. Father Gregory listens to Elenor’s verbalized fears.

When the crusaders arrive, Father Gregory next listens to Thomas’ voice of hopelessness through the grille of the confessional. To save the two young people from themselves and to restore the community’s spiritual health, Father Gregory asks Elenor and Thomas is they will do penance for the whole community. He imposes on them the task of bearing a record of the community’s sins and contrition "to the shrine of Saint James in Spain, to lay it upon the altar of the cathedral in Santiago, and to pray there for us all." The stipulation is that they travel as chaste companions, for their marriage is not to be consummated before the completion of the pilgrimage.
Elenor is very delighted to postpone the inevitable, and Thomas wants to do whatever it takes to put the horrors of the Crusades behind him. Elenor is cast as a strong, but realistic female character who is jarred from her narrow view of the world. Thomas, the older world-wise traveler, softens. Both young people learn to be mindful of those around them and to consider the whole before themselves. The author weaves wonderful stories depicting the Europe of that day into the windows of experiences Elenor and Thomas face in their quest for the scallop shell, which all pilgrims successfully completing the trek to Santiago wear on their hats.


Reviewed by Marlene Mabey

Mary de Holt could hardly speak when her uncle, lord of Holt Manor, announced her marriage match to Gerard de Broat, and elderly widower with rotten black teeth and a smell of sour ale and saddle grease. Mary, whose mother is dead, lives with her uncle and has no other choice among the nobility of medieval England. She decides to flee into the forest, seeking her freedom.

Her nurse maid, Agnes, follows her, and Mary comes to know of Agnes’ unknown past and abilities. Mary discovers an entire community of people living in the forest trying to survive in spite of the cruelty and taxes imposed by the local lords. She also finds a Forestwife, or healer woman; some renegade nuns; outlaws, including one called Robert; and in the end, Mary’s mother. Mary gradually becomes Marian, the green lady of the woods, and is no longer the frightened young girl she once was. She learns the art of healing and learns to resist tyranny and injustice. Theresa Tomlinson weaves a compelling original tale inspired by the myths of Robin Hood. Historical authenticity and fresh imagination are combined in this unique story.

This is required reading for anyone who enjoys the tales of Robin Hood and the Medieval times of England.

A 5+ FI

A 5+ BI Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

This is the story of Mary Ellen Todd, who in 1852—the year of the worst epidemic of cholera to hit the United States—sets out from Arkansas with her father, step-mother, and two younger sisters to find the rich farmlands of Oregon. Starting out with only their own wagon, they join a larger wagon train in Independence, Missouri and begin their journey. Throughout the six-month period that it takes to travel to their final stopping place in Oregon, the Todds keep their eyes on their little guide book and their weary feet on the dusty trail. Sickness, death of cattle, fording of large rivers, Indians, storms, death of fellow travelers, having fellow travelers turn back, and hunger are just a few of the companions they encounter along the way. The story is told in first person with Mary Ellen being the narrator.

The story is one that is familiar to any grade school student who has studied anything about the Westward movement; but, as seen through the eyes of nine-year-old Mary Ellen, all the experiences come alive. Van Leeuwen has put together a story, based on stories that Mary Ellen told to her daughter, Adrietta, and her grandchildren. A few of the names and details were added by Van Leeuwen, but the story is basically the same. She has done a remarkable job in making the reader feel all the emotions of a family traveling West.

The black and white drawings by James Watling lend a softness and tenderness that will make this a much-loved book by young people eager to learn more of their pioneer heritage.

★★★★


A 2+ NF Reviewed by Rachael Williams

*Homeless* gives a true-life glimpse of several months in the life of Mikey, a young boy whose family is homeless. The story is told from the Mikey’s point of view and is illustrated with photos of the endearing family—including his mother, step-father, two sisters, and brother. The book begins as the family is admitted to temporary housing in the Urban Family Center in New York City. The center was one of the first transitional housing projects, and its motto is "families may be homeless, but not helpless." Mikey adjusts to a new school and neighborhood and has to deal
with the stigma of being homeless. He breaks his wrist playing ball, and it’s a good thing that his mother has Medicaid! Mikey’s parents are struggling to become self-sufficient, and his mother completes her G.E.D. exam. Mikey expresses his fears that things will never get better for his family, but the book ends with the family having the first Christmas they’ve had together for a long time.

*Homeless* makes it clear that many homeless people are families who are worthy of help from social programs, and it helps to dispel the stereotypical image of the homeless as bums. It does an excellent job of showing what being homeless means to real people in practical, everyday life. It is not an extreme, sensational view of poverty meant to elicit pity, but rather a hopeful picture of the good that social programs for the homeless can do. *Homeless* is also a delightfully personal depiction that includes incidents with school, friends, and family that any young person can relate to.

★★★★


**A 3-5 NF**

Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

Yep’s newest book describes dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and its impact, specifically on Sachi, a twelve year-old school girl. The event is explained from the bombers’ perspective as well as Sachi’s. The story continues as Sachi travels to the United States for treatment as one of the Hiroshima Maidens. Other countries’ actions concerning atomic weapons are explained. One touching highlight is a description of the park where the bomb was dropped. The story of Sadako, made famous for her heroic quest for life and her belief that 1000 paper cranes would make her better, is also told. The book ends with the statements, "The atom bomb is too terrible a weapon. It must not drop again."

The information is accurate. Yep includes three pages of sources used for his research. He explains his dilemma resolving statistical conflicts in his information. In addition, he reveals that Sachi is actually a composite of several children. While much of the information is told in story form, the last two chapters are information only. This transition may cause difficulties for readers. While this topic is generally discussed in upper elementary grades, the readability level of this version is much lower. The print is large; the sentences are short and simple. It may make an excellent choice for poorer readers in upper grades. The book is a good introduction, but would be best coupled with other books on the same topic and/or discussion on the topic.