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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Authors
Suzanne Olsen, Jan Staheli, Janet O. Francis, Leon Archibald, Marsha D. Broadway, Tom Wright, Denice Barainca, Donna Jorgensen, Gabi Kupitz, Nancy C. Evensen, Leah Hanson, Helen Hoopes, Vicky M. Turner, Sandra L. Tidwell, and Rebecca Gleason

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Book Reviews


* K-3 PB Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

A bird flies into a barn yard and announces that a "NEW ONE" is coming soon. Immediately interested, the animals try to find out who the parents are. Finally, a boy comes out of the house and tells them that the baby is inside, and if they will be quiet, he'll show them. Peeking through the window, the animals exclaim in rhyme.

The text is engaging, with repetition and a combination of prose and rhyme that will suit the beginning reader. The simple plot celebrates the wonder of the arrival of a new baby, while the watercolor pictures effectively display the story. The animals are realistic, yet somehow animated with personality. Enchanting.


A Pre-1 PB Reviewed by Rebecca Gleason

All kinds of mothers sing their babies to sleep at the end of the day. And all kinds of mothers have their own special lullabies. Have you ever wondered what a mother cat would sing as she tenderly cleans her kitten's fur? She sings her babes a "lulla-purr," of course. And the mother cow who nuzzles her calf, as mamas do? Why, she's singing her babe a "lulla-moo." And don't forget the mother sow who finds some room for the left-out runt, as she sings her babes a "lulla-grunt."

*Lullaby Babes* is a delightful and imaginative collection of lullaby rhymes to put even the most reluctant napper to sleep. The verses are simple and whimsical and can be sung to a tune included at the back of the book. Sullivan's watercolor and colored pencil illustrations are bright, charming, and colorful. Children and parents alike will enjoy these fanciful pictures of mother animals with their babies. After all, who could possibly resist four baby mice curled up beneath a leaf, as mama mouse bends down to take one last peek and sing her babes a "lulla-squeak?"


A K-3 PB Reviewed by Rebecca Gleason

The first Thursday of each month is Market Day, and this Thursday is no exception. Tess and her friend Wee Boy each have a Market Day penny to spend and a day full of exciting and wonderful ways to spend it. Together they wander through the colorful streets of their tiny Irish village, enjoying the lively spectacle. Should they treat themselves to sweet clover honey from the Honey Man or gob stoppers from Harry Hooey's sweetie stall? Would it be more thrilling to watch Baba-Ali, the sword swallower, or Jehosophat as he walks across the red-hot coals? And what will the mysterious Madame Savanna tell them if they have their fortunes told? Luckily, a penny always lasts just long enough on Market Day.

Inspired by Bunting's own childhood memories of Ireland, *Market Day* is a charming blend of whimsical characters and delightful local color. Irish names, phrases, and witticisms add authenticity to the story, although a younger child may not understand what a "penny poke of gob stoppers" is. Berry's colored pencil illustrations are lively and colorful, and each page is bursting with fanciful detail. *Market Day* succeeds in sharing a delightfully Irish adventure with young readers.

* 3-9 NF Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

Orr, famous natural history artist, illustrates this oversized book which explores the cross sections of a termite city, a tropical riverbank, a rain forest, a woodland, an oak tree, Antarctic life, Arctic life, a tide pool, a beehive, the American desert, and the ocean.

An illustrated Table of Contents moves the reader to the desired topic. From there, each page provides hours of enjoyment looking at Orr's full-color realistic artwork and reading Butterfield's fact-filled text. In addition, gatefolds furnish a 20" x 25" look at Arctic life and a 39" x 15" look at a rain forest. This selection also includes a detailed index which refers to such terms as "lianas," "termitarium," "saxifrage," and "dryad's saddle," in addition to the many plants and animals found within the volume. A valuable reference volume for elementary and junior high school libraries, *Nature Cross-Sections* lets one view nature's unseen scenes, whether they are below the surface of the earth or 200 feet above the ground.

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B K-3 PB Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

Candlewick Press has compiled a collection of eighteen previously published picture books, all about bears. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt, This Is the Bear, and Let's Go Home, Little Bear* are just a few of the stories included.

Though the illustrations are taken from the original texts, the layout slightly differs. I found it hard to distinguish from each story because there are no separations between stories. The title pages are squeezed onto the same page as the beginning of the stories. The table of contents and the numbered pages do help organize the book somewhat. Still, this is a good buy, a handy compilation, and a must for bear-lovers.

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* 3+ FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

He lives behind the books at an antiquarian book store. His only threat is the bookstore cat. He is the Bookstore Mouse, and he can read. After years of digesting and using the words he has found in the books, he not only reads, but understands the words. One day, due to an unfortunate accident, he is knocked off his high shelf and must take refuge behind an old, ugly book on the bottom shelf. The cat becomes a real peril and the only way Mouse can escape is to "read" himself into a book, which he literally does.

While reading, he discovers and helps in the adventures of Siegfried, scribe and would-be knight. They receive an unreadable message from someone in trouble and start off on their quest to rescue the unknown people from an unknown hazard. Siegfried's one problem is that he can't express himself. He doesn't know which word he wants to use and is often helped by Mouse whispering in his ear.

The texture, size, and style of the special words Mouse reads are especially delightful. The sharp words have sharp pointed letters, the big words are big balloon letters printed on the page and the "Wall of Words" is just that. This is a majestic book that will be adored by anyone who finds books and reading enjoyable.

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* 5+ FI Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

*Angel's Gate*, first published in Australia in 1993, won Australia's prestigious prize for Children's Book of the Year: Older Readers, and Australia's 1994 National Children's Book
Award. This awarding book is sure to be of great interest to American children, aged ten and over. The story focuses on the interaction between a family—(the father is a doctor; the mother, a nurse; young Kimmy; and his sixteen-year-old sister, Julia)—and the two orphaned Ferguson children—(young Micky and his older sister Leena). Mr. Ferguson has been brutally murdered, and the story revolves around trying to protect these two wild children, who witnessed the murder, from the murderer. Told in first person, using the voice of Kimmy, the story covers the death of Micky and Leena's father and their subsequent captivity by the people of Jericho, Australia. For some reason never made entirely clear, Leena and Micky have been raised in the wild with little contact with the civilized world. Leena is a little more socially adept, but they both are frightened and wary of the family and the townspeople. Micky is not "captured" until near the end of the book, and he never does speak to anyone but his sister.

Crew has created an excellent story of Kimmy and Julia's coming of age, and Micky and Leena's struggles to become a part of the modern world. The writing is easy to understand through the eyes of young Kim. The family relations are fleshed out, and we almost feel like we know Kim and Julia. Naturally, the wild children are not so transparent—perhaps they never will be. The ending is a little abrupt. The murderer is identified and loose ends tied up rapidly; and then, the final chapter slips into the same boring life that Kimmy was experiencing before the adventure first started—with a few ending allusions to more adventures to come. Altogether a remarkable book about love, understanding, and changing from a world of the very young to a world filled with the possibilities of the future, and what kind of life all four of the children will have to face as they grow into adulthood.

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A 2-6 NF Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

According to this Nigerian myth told and illustrated by Daly, the sun and the moon used to live together in a huge home on a mountaintop. The Sun, enthralled by the wonders of the Sea, invites the Sea and all of her children to visit their home. When the Sun finds that the Sea's children engulf their home and the entire earth, the Sun and Moon are forced to live in the sky. The "disenchanted Moon" chooses to live "with her star children" where she will never meet the "fool Sun" again.

Daly chose to use the soft colors and texture of watercolors to illustrate this creation myth. As he states, "I have playfully interwoven this African myth with artistic images from the Renaissance, a time when new science challenged old myths, in the hope that it will amuse the gods and entertain the reader." This selection could be used not only in units on the study of the Nigerian culture and creation myths, but also as an introduction to watercolor as an art form or as a writing unit on the use of dialogue in texts. Daly uses expressive words to describe the varied emotions of the three main characters. This book could also be the text for a reader's theater production.

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A 1+ NF Reviewed by Leah Hanson

Paintings and Landscapes are both part of the "First Discovery Art" series. Each contains brightly painted transparent pages, which when peeled back, reveal interesting details and information about many of the art classics of our
time. As the introduction to Paintings reminds us: "The more you study paintings, the more fun they are to look at." Even very young readers will learn more about art as these intriguing books lead children to delightful discoveries about paintings and reiterate the idea that art is fun and for everyone.

This series will be a wonderful introduction to art for young children. Parents and teachers will also appreciate the fine reproductions included to illustrate the text. Cartoon-like figures and illustrations by Ross additionally serve to point out the interesting facts connected with each art work. Each book concludes with a literary "walk" through an art gallery in which several paintings are displayed. Ross' witty renderings of gallery visitors looking at the art echo figures seen in the paintings above the visitors themselves. Thus, readers leave these books with the impression that art and life are inextricably connected.

★★★★


*K-3 PB Reviewed by Suzanne Olson

A young boy is given a new bicycle, but he struggles to ride it. In spite of encouragement and help from his family, success eludes him. At night he dreams of soaring through the clouds on his bike, but during the day he crashes to the ground. Then one day, he gets the magic and rides off with the power and thrill of his dreams.

Written in well-crafted free verse, with masterful pastel drawings, this book is a joy. Reality and fancy flow together to energize the reader with the excitement of learning to ride a bicycle.

★★★★


* Pre-3 PB Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

When a perfect snowball day arrives, all the "good stuff" is pulled out to create a masterful snow family. Of course, readers can guess what happens when the sun comes out! Included in the back of the book are labeled pictures of the items used in the creation of the snow family, as well as an informational section on what makes it snow.

The creative collage illustrations are especially interesting. They contain everything from a plastic fork to buttons. Watercolor cut-out animals make a nice contrast to the collages. The snow people cover two pages which need to be turned vertically to look at. The simple text enhances the illustrations. Snowballs is an ideal book to pull out on a "snowball day" to introduce an art project on collages.

★★★★


A 7+ NF Reviewed by Rebecca Gleason

The Middle Passage is a compilation of sixty-four narrative paintings which tell the story of the centuries-old Atlantic slave trade. The title refers to the final leg of the triangular route slavers followed from European ports to the West African coastline and then on to North and South America and the Caribbean. Typically, this part of the voyage took between five and twelve weeks with conditions aboard ship so brutal that many of the captives died en route. It is estimated that between thirty and sixty million Africans were subjected to this journey, and that barely a third of those people survived.

The sixty-four drawings in The Middle Passage took twenty years to complete. They were created using pen, ink, and tempera on rice paper,
and were printed in tritone with two black inks and one grey ink. "Letting the pure language of art speak for itself," Feelings has created images that are powerful and provocative, yet disturbing on many levels. Feelings portrays the horror and agony of these events in such vivid detail that the reader cannot help but be deeply and personally affected. While the artwork as a whole depicts terror and violence, on another level, it also alludes to the resilience of the human spirit and the healing power of hope. These subtleties might be understood by a young adult reader who is able to put the complex images of The Middle Passage into some context, but younger readers might simply be disturbed by the graphic nature of the drawings. The Middle Passage could be a powerful teaching tool if it is used carefully and sensitively with an age-appropriate audience.


Reviewed by Leah Hanson

Crazy Horse, known better as a great Sioux warrior, began his life relatively quietly as "Curly," a young Indian boy loved and doted on by all those around him. He and his tribe soon came to realize, however, that this young boy was much different than the rest. Early in his youth, Crazy Horse had a vision that would direct the rest of his life. In this vision, he saw a brave warrior, unpainted and undecorated, who could not be touched by the enemy. After this experience, Crazy Horse grew to maturity and true to his vision, was a great warrior who defended his people, but never boasted of his abilities or took from the spoils of his battles.

Crazy Horse grew up during a time of desperate, fierce struggle. As the United States government and population pushed westward, the Sioux found themselves ever defending land that had always belonged to them. This breathtaking biography chronicles the long, painful war that eventually leads to the defeat of the Sioux nation. Throughout the struggle, Crazy Horse stands free and independent, always fighting for his people's freedom, determined to preserve their way of life. However, when bitter cold, scarce food, and the constant threat of Army troops raiding the village push Crazy Horse's band to terrible suffering, the Indian warrior decides he must surrender to save his people. Tragically, his surrender brings further betrayal by the government and his own people, and Crazy Horse is killed. His last whisper hints of his devotion to his vision and his people as he tells his father, "Tell the people it is no use to depend on me anymore."

Drawing on historical interviews of surviving relatives and fellow warriors, Freedman has created a magnificent account of a very heroic young man. This heart-wrenching portrayal will force readers to realize that the infamous Indian wars were not a simple case of the good guys versus the bad guys. Freedman's account gives personality, life, and a face to the Indian and consequently, provokes questions concerning the morality of the government's actions towards the Indians. Accompanying the bittersweet text are historical drawings by Amos Bad Heart Bull, a cousin to Crazy Horse. These stark two-dimensional drawings capture the emotions and act as a record of his tribe. Renderings of events such as the Battle of Little Bighorn and Crazy Horse's death quietly tell the tale of a fiercely independent people struggling for survival. *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse* is a must for schools, libraries, and homes because it presents a part of our nation's history that is far too often glossed over.

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**A 5+ FI Reviewed by Helen Hoopes**

When fourteen-year-old Hope and her younger brother are delivered by their uncaring uncle to Hancock Shaker Village, her biggest concern is how they will be treated. Their mother has recently died and their father is in California panning for gold and hasn't been heard from in over a year. That first day, Hope and John are separated, as is the Shaker custom, and months go by before they are able to see each other. Hope hates all the rules and fights against the love that the Shaker sisters try to show to her. Her mind is always thinking of a way to escape, to get to California, and be reunited with her Pa. As time goes by, John begins to forget what his father even looks like. He adapts well to the Shaker life. Finally, after running away, John's nearly fatal attack of asthma, and a raging flu epidemic in the Village, a letter arrives from their father. What will Hope and John do? Will they choose to go to their father in California or remain with the Shakers?

Gaeddert has created a true-to-life image of Shaker life in Pennsylvania in the 1850s. Her story, according to the "Fact and Fiction" chapter at the end of the book, is based on the actual Hancock Shaker Village. Many characters are modeled after real people. The customs depicted are also based on actual Shaker life: making brushes, gathering and selling herbs, wood-working, nursing the sick, the separation of males and females, the silence, and the simple way of life. Gaeddert has created a story that shows internal conflict, follows the two children for a period of one year as they come to find what is best for them, and is an excellent look at the life of the Shakers.

★★★★★


**A+ 6+ FI Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz**

When Mary's father loses his insurance business, he naturally goes job hunting. Resumes, interviews, eventual employment—in the interim, he decides to take the family on vacation.

Now, sixteen-year-old Mary's family has been on "vacation" for almost two years. Aimlessly traveling the country in their RV, Mary perceives a change in all members of the family as the RV becomes more of a prison-cell-on-wheels than the liberating recreational vehicle it was meant to be. Enroute, baby Andy joins the family of four girls whose education is the open road. With only an occasional foray into the classroom, Mary is concerned for the educational future of her siblings and herself. Her concerns for their physical and social well-being are awakened as she observes her parents abandoning values in lieu of easy money to replenish the dwindling "savings" financing the trip. As her parents become increasingly delusional, Mary takes on even more of a caretaker role. Then, as their RV lies marooned on yet another California beach, another crisis looms, and Mary must choose between protecting the father she loves but can't respect and the innocent little Andy whose road of life lies ahead.

Grant has written a touching portrayal of families torn apart by unemployment and the oft accompanying depression, bouts of pride, lack of self-esteem, and homelessness. The homeless have a face, and each face has a story in this well-written novel. Mary represents those children forced to grow up too fast—to be responsible for too much, too soon. Although this could have turned into a downer type of book, it does not. Throughout is a sense of family and dogged determination to make something of one's self. And, get out a hankie for the end—love, not hate, motivates Mary.
Gerhardt, an herbalist like Vashti, nurses her at his home and is immeasurably kind to her.

Hesse draws readers into this world with the first sentences and won't let them go. The characters are rich and real, and the angels, both mortal and immortal, are believable and endearing. Do not miss this book.

Reviewed by Donna Jorgensen


This book presents a 300 year history of Ellis Island—from Dutch ownership during the 1600s to museum status in the 1990s. Readers learn how the island got its name, the intended role of the island in the fortification of New York City, and about the island’s recent inclusion as a part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. The island's sixty-two year history as the point of entry for immigrants to the United States is the primary focus.

Text and illustrations combine to effectively portray the experience of millions as they were processed through the immigration facility. The text describes the crowded conditions, the days of waiting, the medical exams, the on-going fear of being rejected. Black pencil illustrations of buildings, ships, and crowded immigrants capture the look and feel of nineteenth century photographs. Colored pencils and soft-toned watercolors call attention to a point of focus in each picture.

This book will be of interest to young readers of American history. The pages are full of facts and interesting information, and an index and helpful glossary are included. But, it is not a book to read for pleasure. The tone is very somber, and the excitement of entering a new land is clearly missing. The reader follows the immigrants through the immigration process on Ellis Island, but never quite steps through the "doorway to freedom" promised in the title.

Reviewed by Denice Barainca
Feet will tap, and fingers will snap, as the reader twists and jitters into the wild and exciting world of dance and rhythm. Who could turn down an invitation to "Jig to the music, sway to the tune, polka after supper with your fork and spoon?" Or, "Dance a mambo, snap to a rap, put on your cleats and tap, Tap, TAP?"

Silly, snappy rhymes encourage the reader to leap, wiggle, hop, jive, rattle, boogie, hula, rumba, and more. Most adults will get tired simply reading the book! Dypold's cut-paper collage illustrations add a vibrant splash of color to the text as the characters literally dance across the pages. *Twist with a Burger, Jitter with a Bug* is a fast-paced motion marathon and fun for all.


With the help of her mother and some fishermen, Princess Grainne saves a young seal who is trapped under a log on the beach. Yearly on Grainne's birthday, the seal returns, and Grainne grows to love him. On her eighteenth birthday the seal appears as a handsome young Seal-man, Deodatus. Grainne longs to live with Deodatus in the sea kingdom of Tir nan Og, but being the only daughter of the Lord and Lady of Skye, she sacrifices her desires to fulfill her duty to her people. Deodatus, in turn, sacrifices his desire to return to his land, comes to Skye and eventually claims his love, Princess Grainne.

*The Seal Prince*, an Irish fairy tale about love and sacrifice, has an enchanting quality which comes to life with the watercolor and colored pencil illustrations by Waldherr.

* All PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

When Jack McTavish married Marion McGillicuddy they only had enough money for either a large family or a wonderful, speedy car. They opted for seven children and an old Rattlebang of a car, which they and Granny McTavish use to go on marvelous picnics to the beach or the river. The one drawback to this idyllic family seems to be Granny's cooking. Her pies and pizzas are large and very hard to eat, owing to the fact that she bakes them at a very low temperature for a very long time. Even the toughest teeth can not break the crust. But, they make marvelous Frisbees or bowling balls. One day the family decides to go to the top of Fogg Mountain instead of the beach. There they swim in the hot springs and are nearly covered over with hot lava from an exploding volcano. Only quick thinking, Granny's pizza and the old Rattlebang bring the family back home safely—with plans for the next picnic in Tornado Valley!

Kellogg, as always, has done a remarkable job of interpreting Mahy's very funny story. This book is a nominee for the Utah Children's Picture Book Award and will be enjoyed by anyone who is adventurous and enjoys a good picnic.

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* Pre-2 PB Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

Kate discovers at school that she is the only one in her class without a daddy. When she asks her sister Glory and her mom why they don't have a daddy, they tell her about the dad who lives across town, but who doesn't want to know his children. The two girls secretly walk to their dad's house, where they see him with his new baby. When he doesn't recognize them, they go home broken-hearted. Their mother explains that he does not love them simply because he doesn't know them, and that he is afraid to love them. He is not as lucky as they are because they know how to love everybody. Glory is not sure she has room to love her dad, but Kate thinks she'll save a place for him, just in case.

This book sensitively deals with the difficult issue of divorce and adds new dimensions as Kate shows compassion for her father. The pictures are watercolor with great detail.

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C 5-9 FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

*Hostage* could be Myers' juvenile version of "The River Wild," complete with the inevitable river-rafting rapids scene at the climax. This story might arouse local interest, if not for its literary merits then for its setting in the area of Dinosaur National Monument in Utah.

Alyssa DePietro is an artsy New York girl who finds herself in alien surroundings in the Utah desert. She reluctantly befriends Rob Vogel, a country boy, as they participate in a youth group excursion in the West. While at Dinosaur National Monument, Alyssa is quite taken by a fossilized dinosaur egg which, the reader is informed, is quite rare. The reader must be informed of this so as not to be surprised when the egg turns up in the backpack of a stranger that the youths have nicknamed "Skunk," in reference to his unique hair color. His intent is to make off cross-country with this stolen property, but he runs into the hiking party who discover his transgression. He takes Alyssa and Rob hostage, and they begin their journey that will end in a wild trip down the rapids.

In fairness to Myers the story is quite readable. It moves quickly, includes well-integrated topographical information, and presents, for the most part, believable dialogue. The short chapters
are told alternatively from Alyssa's or Rob's point of view. This book would be of interest to youth who enjoy action and survival fiction. However, character development is somewhat weak, particularly for "Skunk," whose reasoning and actions are still befuddling to the reader at the end of the action—this from a character who is on center stage for most of the story.


* 4-8 NF Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Although the scope of the book is identified in the title, the theme of ethical acquisition and use of money is the best feature of the book. In easy-to-understand language, Otfinoski skillfully shares valuable information on starting and running a business, personal budgets, advertising techniques, comparison shopping, banks, charity contributions, loans, credit cards, savings, stocks, mutual funds, bonds, and recordkeeping. Liberally scattered throughout the text are "Money Moments"—intriguing financial facts.

Every child needs access to this information. Parents who want their children to understand fiscal responsibility should share this book with their children. Teachers can use the book as a springboard to teach mathematics, business skills, and other concepts. Young people will gain a greater appreciation of money and will learn techniques for using it wisely. *The Kid's Guide to Money* should be available in school and public libraries. It should also be considered for high interest-low vocabulary collections and for use in adult literacy programs.


* 4+ FI Reviewed by Leon Archibald

The universe of *The Golden Compass* seems, overall, very much like our own. The most striking difference, introduced right at the beginning, is that each human has a daemon, a spirit-familiar—an animal-companion that is connected to that person inseparably. When the main character, Lyra
Belacqua, is first encountered, her daemon is in the form of a moth and it can change form at will.

Lyra's carefree and slightly wild life among the sober scholars of Jordan College is interrupted by the arrival of her uncle, Lord Asriel, who shows the scholars evidence of a dark mystery in the North, including the photograph of what some believe is a "severed" child. Then just as suddenly, Mrs. Coulter, an irresistibly sophisticated woman, begins showering Lyra with the attention she had longed for from her uncle. Lyra discovers that there is a connection between Mrs. Coulter, her uncle, and all the children that are disappearing—victims of "Gobblers" who use the children as subjects in horrible experiments that separate them from their daemons. Lyra's unusual gifts force her into a central role in a dangerous struggle, the outcome of which will affect her entire world, as well as a universe beyond her own.

The writing is reminiscent of Joan Aiken's work: rich, unusual, marvelous characters driving a complicated plot, constant surprises, moments of overwhelmingly powerful emotion—all of which gives readers the desire to start all over again the minute they finish. Now, the interminable wait for volume two.

***Please do not be put off by the hype that is surrounding the publication of this terrific fantasy novel. The publisher is trying to reach the adult as well as the children's fantasy market.


A 5+ FI Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

*The Secret of Sarah Revere* tells of the events which led up to Paul Revere's famous ride to Lexington and Concord, April 1775. It is another of Rinaldi's excellent historical fictions based on people who have made American history. The account is told from the perspective of thirteen-year-old Sarah, daughter of patriot Revere. Rinaldi weaves the accounts of Revere's many rides to inform the colonists of British action at the Boston port with the family's concerns over his involvement in anti-British activities. The reader learns of Revere's occupation as a silver-smith craftsman and also becomes acquainted with British commander William Gage, Lady Frankland, and Revere's friend, Doctor Joseph Warren.

In the author's note, Rinaldi relates how she became fascinated with the history of Paul Revere. Clearly, the background material for this novel has been carefully researched. The characters in the
Revere family are believable and well-developed. Rinaldi brings contemporary application to the story by developing Sarah's concerns over "What matters, Father? What's true, or what people think?" This book has obvious applications to classroom studies in American history, but the casual reader will also have this period of American history more deeply rooted in his/her mind. What a perfect way to learn history!

★★★★


* All NF PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

"Long ago by the sands of the Nile River a great Egyptian queen gave birth to her last son. The child was small and frail and sometimes all but forgotten among all the children of the royal household. Portraits of the family, by custom, could only include the daughters. But even if the sons had been shown, the littlest boy, Tutankhamen, might still have been left out."

So begins Tutankhamen's Gift. Tutankhamen might never have been noticed if his father and his older brother hadn't died and left him the only heir to the throne. King Tut's father was a much-loved ruler, who commissioned sculptures and artists to build great temples to the Gods. But, his brother was a tyrant who wanted to change the Egyptians religious beliefs. He tore down all that his father and others had created and left Egypt an empty land. When he died the people did not mourn him and deserted all of his towns, temples and buildings. When Tutankhamen came to the thrown he attempted to re-create what had been destroyed.

Sabuda's artwork, true to the Egyptian period he is portraying, is bold, vivid and a delight to the eye. The book superbly exemplifies the power, richness, and lavish nature of this period in the world's history. Time has eroded the magnificent temples and the sun has bleached their colors, but if we could travel back in time we would probably find an Egypt much like the one portrayed in this book. This book is a Utah Children's Informational Book Award Nominee for 1996-97.★★★★


B 3+ NF Reviewed by Leah Hanson

Fernand Léger, a French painter, once said "I wanted to mark my return to simplicity by a direct, unsubtle art that everyone can understand." And indeed, in What the Painter Sees, readers learn about art in a way that everyone can understand. Divided into fourteen chapters covering topics such as perspective, lighting, subject matter, and point of view, this compact introduction to art makes the craft and science of the artistic medium accessible to all.

Readers of all ages will enjoy the hands-on approach as they use stickers to create their own still lifes, experiment with perspective, use a mirror to play with anamorphoses, and mix and match famous portraits. The "activity book" quality of What the Painter Sees will keep readers engaged. However, the text, though thorough in what it does present, attempts to detail too many aspects of the world of art in a mere forty-five pages. As a brief glimpse into the art world, this book still acts as a delightful introduction and will encourage young readers to explore art, artistic ability, and imagination. Indeed, readers learn to see "what the painter sees" and even to see as a painter sees.

★★★★


A 1-3 NF PB Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Minty just cannot keep in the good graces of her Mistress . . . or the field boss. Even her mother's warning that "when your head is in the
lion's mouth, you ought to pat it a little," does not change her. Maybe it is because they all expect her to act like a slave, and Minty is determined to be free. In fact, she is so bent on freedom, that she grows up to guide hundreds of black people running to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

This simple story of a few events in the early life of Harriet Tubman is presented with clarity and sympathy, but without sentimentality. It is accompanied by full color, authentic detail in Pinkney's evocative paintings. Minty is an excellent book to introduce young readers to biographies.


A All PB Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

A young student develops a severe case of math phobia when a teacher suggests to the class that we can turn almost anything into a math problem. As this befuddled student goes throughout the day, various situations arise—from catching the bus to eating in the cafeteria—which are, in fact, math problems. The answers to these problems are found on the back cover of the book. Some questions are real and others are just for fun, such as:

"Does tunafish + tunafish = fournafish?" Just when the student realizes he can solve any math problem, thus breaking the math curse, another teacher suggests that we can think of almost everything as a science experiment!

Scieszka and Smith have collaborated for another success! The text is witty with humor on many different levels giving obvious appeal for any age. The illustrations are unusual yet appealing and compliment the text. This clever commentary on how frequently math is used and the fear many people have of it is certainly worthy of a read.


NR K-4 PB Reviewed by Jan Staheli

"Grown-ups want children to be happy. Grown-ups like to punish people. Grown-ups make you go to the dentist. Grown-ups are always weighing themselves. Grown-ups always have to know what time it is. Grown-ups hate to answer questions. Grown-ups get to do all the driving."

These are just a few of the pages from Steig's outrageous picture book, where children and adults live in direct conflict, and adult foibles and curiosities are shown from a child's point-of-view. Adult readers may cringe a bit but will probably laugh—maybe out loud, as they see themselves more than once on these pages. However, this is not a book for children. It is written with more than Steig's usual amount of sarcasm and satire, and it takes a long time for a child to develop the ability to perceive and appreciate those literary conceits. This is a cynical little book, with wicked illustrations, pointedly blasting away at adults in a rather direct manner. It would not be on my list of "must haves."


* 7+ F Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

Halima, the fourteen-year-old daughter of Sheikh Essafeh, leader of the Beni Khalid, is engaged to be married to handsome Atiyah. In the Christian year 1302, when Atiyah is sent away to the university at Fez, Halima must console herself with the daily tasks of a Beduin woman. During a move from their campsite to Wadi Hammamat, where they hope to find "green grass, fresh thistles, and cyclamen," Halima's camel becomes separated from the rest of the caravan and is lost in a sand storm. Rescued by an enemy tribe, she learns the ways of the "enemy" and is on the brink of
marrying the "evil" Sheikh Raisulu. Halima resigns herself to her fate, unaware that Atiyah has had dreams regarding his beloved's predicament.

Temple suffered a sudden heart attack on the day she finished this manuscript and has since passed away; thus the novel has even more significance. Her late father, Ambassador Frederick Nolting, was instrumental in Temple's vast knowledge of the world. Indeed, even though The Beduins' Gazelle is set in a far-distant era, the story rings true and is a metaphor for our time. Temple traveled widely and researched extensively and is well qualified to write such engaging fiction.


* 3-8 NF Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

More than 600 alphabetically-arranged entries list common figures of speech, examples of use in a sentence, meanings, and origins. An introduction explains idioms and how they come into usage. A brief page of instructions explains the use of the reference book. An "Alphabetical Index" and a "Key Word Index" enhance the accessibility of the alphabetical entries. The friendly format and humorous illustrations will appeal to young readers.

Terban, a teacher of English and theater at Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School, consulted a panel of teachers to help select "the most commonly confusing idioms" and lexicographers for technical assistance. As in his prior books dealing with language and its use, Terban has made this word book fun. Easy-to-use and clearly written, this reference source should be purchased for school and public libraries.

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A 4+ FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Maddy is spending the summer again with Grandpa because her famously musical parents are too busy. She doesn't mind though; she sometimes feels out of place near her parents, because she doesn't seem to have a musical bone in her body.

On the other hand, "Elves hear all the songs of the world, and animals, birds and other creatures hear pieces of the songs of the world. Humans hear none of these notes, only the slightest, faintest traces of their whispers. Which they call wind. Which they call water." Hardly any humans see elves—but Maddy does. She sees one riding a cat. Then she finds the saddle that has been lost, and she begins to hear beautiful sounds, even understanding the thoughts of birds and other small animals. She wants desperately to get to know the little creature she has seen and begins to search for him with hopes of returning the saddle.

Meanwhile at the elf camp, Nata finds himself in a lot of trouble. If the saddle is found by humans, they may come looking for the colony. Nata is charged with the task of finding his lost cat and getting the saddle back. In the process, he meets Maddy and realizes that she can see him. Being seen by a human is forbidden to elves and talking to one means banishment from the elf camp, but Nata is fascinated by this human and wants to learn more.

This book is very well-written, poetic and compelling. The story forces the reader on, page after page. And the beautiful passages create exquisite pictures in the mind.

* * *
Katy and her Ma are spending the summer in the mountains where Katy can get fresh air and Ma can spend time writing her book. But Katy doesn't like change. She doesn't feel brave enough to cope with new friends, or worse—no friends. She would prefer to stay safe at home with Ma's attention undivided by her writing. Soon she meets Lena May who has electric red hair, wears electric-colored clothes, and seems to be plugged into an unknown energy source. Lena May loves adventures, hates to sit still, knows about kissing and other important and fascinating things, and thinks "maybe" is "a weak and wobbly word." Katy slowly allows herself to relax enough to have a few adventures with Lena May—like catching Horatio, the enormous pink pig and going to a funeral at the cemetery. Their adventuring even takes them out into the night to spy on lovers in the lane, but instead, they find Lena May's Gran walking down the middle of the road in her nightgown, sound asleep. Then Katy finds out there is more than one kind of courage and that she can help Lena May because they are friends.

This is a light summer book full of humor and understanding. The characters are bright and alive; their problems are treated with compassion and sensitivity. The pain of being shy and afraid of life is drawn clearly, while Katy's struggle to find her own courage leads her to a deeper knowledge of her life and of herself.

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Rosa is ten and spends much of her time sitting in her father's chair and dreaming. She does this because her life is so confusing and upsetting that dreams are preferable to reality. Rosa is Jewish and lives in Nazi-occupied Holland with her mother, father, and sister Sylvie. Their lives are continually being hedged about by rules and restrictions, fear and the need to hide the fear, if possible, from each other and themselves. Rosa and Sylvie keep a chart on their wall listing and dating each new limitation as it is given by the Nazis. They try to go on with life, but sometimes dreaming is the only way to stop the creeping knowledge of the terrible things that are going on around them. When their family is finally picked up by the soldiers for "relocation," a puzzling chance gives Rosa a way to escape, but forces her to leave her family behind.

This is a strange, compelling story based on the author's personal experiences during the war and on rumors which circulated during that time among the Jewish community. The narration is entirely from Rosa's point of view, and it proceeds in a rather stilted manner at times. However, this may be a result of the translation process. Still, the style does heighten the drama of the situation and makes the progression of this very real family toward their fate difficult to bear and impossible to put down. The book is recommended for grades three through seven by the publisher, but because of the unusual style and the grimness of the contents, Dancing on the Bridge of Avignon would be more appropriate for older readers.

*K-4 PB Reviewed by Jan Staheli*

"When Gina moved to an apartment in Queens, the girls in her building were mostly teens. Others were still in the sandbox stage. Oddly, there were no girls Gina's age. Yet, and more oddly still, there were boys, boys, boys galore, boys, boys, boys—Gina's age, on every floor. Upstairs and downstairs, front and back, lived Brian, Ryan, Tyler, and Zach. Nicky, Ricky, Rocky, and Wally, Alvin, Calvin, Sam, and Pasquale. Paul, Gus, Vince, and good gracious, Theo and his cousins, Stan and Ignatius. Michael R., Michael V., Michael M., and Michael G. . . ."

Gina can't get the boys to let her play with them, until one day she catches a baseball, makes a spectacular throw, and then clutching the bat slams a ball right over third base. After that, apartment life is not such a bore, and she starts school in the fall with a lot of great friends.

Waber is up to his usual best with this new book. The text rhymes with rhythm and humor. The pictures are expressive of kids, as only he can make them. The story tells of a child with a typical problem—a new neighborhood and no friends—and lets the story resolve in a very satisfactory manner. Two thumbs up for *Gina!*

★★★★


*4-8 FI Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz*

Mary O'Shea is a determined girl who in 1812 is asked by her father to help her older sister and brother keep their Mackinac Island farm together as best they can while he joins the Americans battling the British. Only twelve years old when her father takes his leave, Mary's eyes chronicle the events taking shape on the island she loves so much. While her sister is becoming romantically involved with a young British officer, her brother is secretly helping the Americans, and her Indian orphan friend, Gavin, must make decisions between staying with his adoptive family or his Indian relatives. Mary, too, is busy saving their cow from thieves, planting gardens, bartering with the British, and keeping farm and family intact. Beneath this daily struggle for survival are the lessons learned: seeing beauty in the ordinary, appreciating and loving wild life and domestic animals, learning to get along and love those with political leanings other than one's own, forgiving the "enemy" after the war, watching beloved siblings leave the island, and realizing that family is forever no matter where one goes.

For historical fiction buffs, Whelan has woven an element of The War of 1812 into a story with characters so realistic that they carry the reader to Mackinac to explore the human side of war.

★★★★