1995

Book Reviews

Gabi Kupitz

Bonnie Walker

Suzanne Olsen

Tom Wright

Shari Sabin

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Kupitz, Gabi; Walker, Bonnie; Olsen, Suzanne; Wright, Tom; Sabin, Shari; Christensen, Rita; McGuire, Kristine; Smith, Nathan M.; Hoopes, Helen; Staheli, Jan; Francis, Janet O.; Henderson, Marrisse; Tidwell, Sandra L.; Clayton, Cheryl; and Putnam, Jill (1995) "Book Reviews," Children's Book and Media Review: Vol. 16 : Iss. 5 , Article 4.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol16/iss5/4

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Book Reviews

Authors
Gabi Kupitz, Bonnie Walker, Suzanne Olsen, Tom Wright, Shari Sabin, Rita Christensen, Kristine McGuire, Nathan M. Smith, Helen Hoopes, Jan Staheli, Janet O. Francis, Marrisse Henderson, Sandra L. Tidwell, Cheryl Clayton, and Jill Putnam

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol16/iss5/4
Book Reviews


* 5+ FI

Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

In the year 1063, young Evyn loves to recite poetry and sing, though he cannot read. Welsh by birth, Evyn hopes his voice will be the ticket out of life as a landbound serf; for as a storyteller, he can roam wherever he pleases. All of his dreams die, however, when his drunken uncle insults Lord Rhywallon’s guests, the sons of Gryffin. In retaliation, the Gryffins kill Evyn’s father and leave Evyn mutilated—his ability to speak permanently taken. Sold into slavery, Evyn, now sporting a collar, is called "Shadow" and considered useless. Following a bone-breaking accident, Lady Ealdgyth sends him to the monks at Aethelney for recovery.

With the monk Lewys as mentor, Shadow learns to read and write and finds these skills provide a way for him to communicate his name and to raise himself out of slavery. So valued does Evyn become that Earl Harold of Wessex adopts him as his foster son. In 1066, sixteen-year-old Shadow, as he is now affectionately called, witnesses and records the rise and fall of Harold who comes to the throne after the death of King Edward. Ruling only forty weeks and one day, King Harold’s death at the Battle of Hastings marks the end of the Anglo-Saxon period and the beginning of the Norman era.

*The King’s Shadow* is well-researched, fast-paced, and an historic glimpse into a window of early England.

****


* 4+ FI

Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

Jazz, ten-year-old daughter of an Irish mother and a now-deceased Sikh father, rings up social services and requests an emergency rescue when her mother appears to have abandoned her. Birdie (Jazz’s mother) appears on the scene and accuses the Scottish authorities of kidnapping her daughter. Determining that Birdie needs to learn parenting skills and that Jazz would be best served by spending some time with her father’s relatives in India, the authorities separate mother and daughter.

By their standards, her relatives do everything they can to make her visit a pleasant one. For Jazz, India is not like Scotland, and she hates her situation.
When Jazz becomes ill, a tough, but caring female doctor gives Jazz a universal culture lesson. With Jazz whining about her relatives and everything being so different, the physician responds: "Aye, so it is. And that's the joy in it. Would you be wanting to travel all this way to find everything just the same as what you came from?"

Realistic characterization and insight into the cultures of "regular" people in both Scotland and India propel this story of a headstrong girl who is searching for identity and finds herself opening up to her father's family and to her own mother.

-----


A 11+ BI

Reviewed by Jill Putnam

For generations, the history of our civilization has been told through the voices of men, about men. This short-sighted view of the world has overlooked many important contributors of history—namely, women. Herstory gives the courageous women of our world history the acknowledgment they deserve. The lives of 123 prominent female historical figures are briefly focused upon in this book; their trials, struggles, courage, and successes are retold in a brief one to two page biography of each woman's life.

This is an inspirational book that motivates an individual to be all that she or he can be. Readers will find themselves admiring all of the women they read about, not because what they did was always admirable, but because they accomplished something that was outside the normal social expectations for women. This book would probably be best for older and more mature students because it touches upon controversial issues such as sexual independence, birth control, abortion, etc.

★★★★
Aani set down the basket of brown nuts she’d been gathering and sat beneath her favorite tree. Every day, at least once, she leaned gratefully against it’s thick, rough trunk. Here she had daydreams too large to fit in her family’s crowded hut where crying babies, her grandfather’s complaints, and her sisters’ gossip drowned out the sounds of her own thinking.

This is the true story of one young girl from India who was able to protect her village’s quality of life when it was threatened by a company’s intent to deforest the land. Through her example and bravery, Aani and the other women of her village protected the trees with their own bodies. This stopped the process, and led to the creation of village councils in many parts of India which oversee selective cutting of trees in order to avoid endangering communities.

This book is excellent for teaching an appreciation of our earth and its valuable resources, as well as conveying the message that one person can make a difference. The author’s use of words is very skillful, making reading a pleasure. That, combined with colorful gouache-on-paper illustrations, makes this a welcome addition to any elementary or middle school library.


Lungwort and his wife, Sweet Cecily, are tiny deer mice who have lived for a long time near Gray House; but, their food supply is now dwindling. They ask Mr. Ocax, the great-horned owl who protects them from predators, if half of their family can move to New House. When Mr. Ocax refuses, Poppy, one of Lungwort’s daughters, decides to cross forbidden Dimwood Forest, visit New House, and find out why. In the front of the book is a map of the Dimwood Region which helps the reader trace Poppy’s adventures.

The text and illustrations of this fun animal story are both imaginative and realistic. Floca’s pencil drawings portray the drama of mouse vs. owl in battle, the frivolity of Poppy dancing in the forest, and a myriad of emotions in between. The mice, owl, and porcupine express thoughts and feelings about concerns that readers might expect them to be worried about: fear of no food, desire for freedom, and courage for facing challenges. Avi uses the story to convey interesting facts about the small world of deer mice and the larger worlds of the porcupine and the great...
homed owl. The reader will learn about the eating habits and behavior of all three animals, and obtain a close look at a great horned owl feather and a porcupine quill. By the way, Avi calls the loud, bossy, but loveable porcupine in the story by its genus species name, Erethizon Dorsatum. What a great way to plant that bit of information into the head of the young reader!

★★★★


* 7+ NF BI Reviewed by Marrisse Henderson

The excitement of power and glory meets the fear of imprisonment and death in Parallel Journeys. Alfons Heck wants to join the Hitlerjugend, Hitler’s youth organization, because love of country and Hitler inspire him. Helen Waterford, a young Jew, looks forward to a good life and marriage. They both live near Frankfurt. It is 1933, and Hitler has just come to power. Parallel Journeys traces their stories throughout the war. At age sixteen, Alfons rises in the ranks of the Hitlerjugend to "Bannfuehrer" (equivalent to a Major General over 6,000 boys) and experiences the terror of fighting first hand. He struggles to deal with the realities and horrors that hit him after the war. Helen’s family moves to Holland to avoid imprisonment. Unfortunately, they are eventually sent to Auschwitz; Helen survives, but her husband does not. She must rebuild her life from the chaos that remains. Many years later Helen and Alfons meet and begin lecturing together. They tell their stories so that no one will forget, so that there can be healing, and so understanding and love can begin—that one day there might be world peace.

This book’s strength lies in its message and Ayer’s expert retelling of the story. Ayer specializes in writing young adult and teen literature dealing with World War II, so she adroitly brings together accurate historical information with the living words of Helen and Alfons. Original photos of Helen and Alfons also augment the story. A valuable index and bibliography are included which point the reader to further sources and information as well. Helen and Alfons give the reader priceless reconciliation in a world that seems constantly at odds. They lead out for unity and understanding. They must be heard.

★★★★
Bird and Josh embrace the summer and all its joys at Whitefish Lake—sleeping over on Ossaway Island, firecrackers under Joe's girlfriend's chair, basking in icy lake water while the sun beats down on them, even entering the summer's contest for the biggest fish. But always running under the top level of shining life is the dark tide of anxiety for Josh's HIV-positive body. Bird moves into adolescence that summer, physically and emotionally, and begins to contemplate being a woman; Josh plays pranks and hides fear.

One of the very sad aspects of the AIDS epidemic we now face in the United States is the fact that no one can escape its reach. It seems so unfair that children should be prey to this adult horror, but so it is. Bantle obviously feels strongly about this, but he uses it more as a plot device than as a real condition, and the pain is not nearly as clearly depicted as are the joys of summer on the lake. *Diving for the Moon* is good enough for a quick read, but not much thoughtful reaction is required.

---

Ryan O'Keefe has just moved to Kentucky from Arizona and is experiencing a number of cultural shocks. Not only does he miss the desert country he loves, but everyone in Kentucky talks funny, and he discovers that here, the sixth graders go to middle school instead of elementary school. This last issue is the problem which gives him the most trouble, until he discovers that the really "cool" kids will be wearing new shoes: Slam Dunk Sky Jumpers. For only $124.99, Ryan, too, can be really cool. Herein lies the problem. Getting the money for new shoes seems to take over Ryan's life, until nothing is more important to him—not his friends, his twin brother and sister, or even his beloved pet tarantula.

Who cannot sympathize with Ryan in his quest for the solution to fear, being the new guy in school, and pre-teen peer pressure? The situation is familiar enough that readers of all ages can understand. Written with a good ear for dialogue and a feel for the concerns of a twelve year-old, this book will delight children in the upper elementary grades. The conclusion is satisfying and makes a statement without making the moral conspicuous.

**A 6+ NF PB**

Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

This very interesting look at the Civil War is presented through the eyes of the photographs, newspapers, and people of the time. Bolotin and Herb have arranged this appealing book as if it were a scrapbook. After a short introduction, each double-spread page has a short right hand column with a written account of the events depicted. The entire left-hand page and the left column of the right page are filled with pictures of the soldiers, the camp gear, battle scenes, and other interesting visuals that try to convey what a scrapbook of a soldier might have looked like. Images from newspapers, letters home, battle fields, and prisoners of war camps, etc., really make this an interesting look at the war which cost this nation so dearly.

Every few pages, a new topic is addressed. Some of the topics covered are "Outfitting the Troops," "Feast or Famine," "Prisoners of War," "Writing Home," and "Battling Boredom." Bolotin and Herb have created a beautifully illustrated, black and white look at the Civil War. Included are a glossary and a selected bibliography. This will make a great addition to the Civil War buff's library.

★★★★


**A K-3 PB**

Reviewed by Jan Staheli

The boy works hard with his father and brother, shoveling salt. They are glad to have jobs, even though the salt cuts their hands and feet. One day a man stands in the middle of town and reads a newspaper, and the boy finds a dream—a dream to read someday. He is determined to learn what those black marks mean, and he will be the best reader in the county. In the boy's words: "'Mama, I have to learn to read,' I say. She holds my hand and feels my hunger racing fast as my heart." Soon the newspaper man gives the boy the key, the secret to the little black marks, and also writes the boy's name for him in the dust of the street . . . B O O K E R.

Booker T. Washington is a name for everyone to remember and revere. In spare, clear language, this book tells the story of his childhood and the birth of his dream of obtaining an education. But the real star here is Soentpiet. His paintings glow with firelight and yearning. Filling each page with somber, warm tones, the artist draws readers into the story and into the life of a small boy with a desire, a hunger for knowledge that would lead him to grand heights as a scientist and a human being.
Snakes of Utah is a colorful book for laymen and will sell well with backpackers, Boy Scouts, or individuals and families who like spending time outdoors. Information in the book will answer questions that naturally arise when encountering a Utah snake. The first question that comes to mind is nearly always, "What snake is that?" Studying the color photographs in the book will make identification simple. Along with the picture, the inquirer will find both a snake’s common and scientific name. After determining what snake was seen, the curious reader can discover what the snake eats, where it lives, if it will bite, and if it is poisonous. Other interesting biological information is also given for each snake.

Some people may be put off by the cover; others will find themselves attracted to the book because of its colorful, captivating cover. Once readers have picked up the book, they are not likely to put it down until they have studied all of the pictures and learned many interesting things about Utah’s little-known reptiles—the snakes. This is a book they will include in their backpacks when spending time enjoying Utah’s outdoors.


Spyglass is the true story of Helene Deschamps’ experiences as an undercover agent for France during World War II. A high-spirited teenager, driven by her patriotism, Helene decides to join the Resistance to help her people overcome the German occupation of France. This pivotal decision requires Helene to sacrifice virtually everything, as she spends nearly six years completing various missions as a spy. The consequences of Helene’s decision lead to a major theme of the book, as expressed by Helene in the epilogue—"was it really worth it?" The reader must also ask this question as Helen is beaten, harassed, taken prisoner, and stripped of virtually everything she loves.

This book is a valuable tool in teaching students more than just the names and dates of World War II. While creating a sympathy and respect for all those who suffered for their cause in World War II, Helene’s story has not been romanticized. Her descriptions are often brief and her emotional responses only superficially described. This book allows the reader to see war stripped of honor and glory—for
Helene received none—and to question and develop personal convictions and feelings about war. Since this is a true historical account, Helene has not excluded such things as violence, sex, rape, other sexual harassment, and some profanity. These, however, are only briefly mentioned and constitute a very minor part of the book.


Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Yolanda is the voice of Chicago—bigger than usual, brighter than most, and full of zest! Whether she is teaching Shirley-Whirley how to bake a real cake or confounding the drug-rats who break her brother’s harmonica (read that “heart”), Yolanda is louder and better than anyone else. Yolanda’s mother has no idea of the “horsepower” her daughter has available, and even Aunt Tiny (three hundred plus pounds, several beauty salons, and Make-Way Gorgeous) has only a glimpse. When Mama moves the kids out of Chicago to mild-mannered Grand River, Michigan, Yolanda mourns she’ll never need to be on her toes—but nothing stays stagnant around Yolanda!

Fenner’s characters (with the exception of Mama, who just may be overwhelmed) command the reader’s entire attention. Young Andrew, with music flowing in his veins instead of blood; Yolanda who will have the world march to her beat or else; even Shirley-Whirley, skillfully endowed with life in a minor key—all are unforgettable. Fenner has a winner here.


Reviewed by Rita Christensen

This Christmas tale includes all of the traditional Biblical passages generally used in the telling of the Nativity. Ganeri retells the story of Christ in a modest, child-friendly manner that should be acceptable to Christians of all faiths. Photographs of ethnically diverse children among the animals and props have been placed against a white background with simple backdrop illustrations.
An editor's note tells the reader that the book is to give children, parents, and teachers ideas for putting on their own Nativity play. The stark Dorling Kindersley layout style is too insipid for picture book reading. If there is a need, however, in the home, classroom, or community for Christmas pageant ideas, then *The Story of Christmas: A Nativity Tale for Children* will prove inspiring.

**A Pre-3 NF PB**

Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

This selection, written and illustrated by Godkin, explores the harmful and beneficial characteristics of common garden insects. A gardener finds that her garden is being inhabited by a number of insects and then considers the helpful and harmful effects of each. The ladybug is an insect that she is fond of, but the gardener does not know its part in the web of garden life. She decides to use a universal application of poisonous bug spray to rid her garden of harmful insects. From the results of this action, the gardener comes to know that the ladybug is indeed a special, very beneficial insect.

*What About Ladybugs?* is a simple story, but the explanation of the interaction of plants and insect life is clear. This book would be used well at home or at school with a bag or box of ladybugs. Ladybugs can be ordered through most garden catalogs or purchased at a specialty garden shop. Seeing firsthand the release of hundreds of these polka-dot-backed insects is an experience children will not forget!

****


**A 5+ FI**

Reviewed by Shari Sabin

Twelve-year-old Freedom Newcastle is not a slave, but he works like one: cutting willows, weeding, and taking care of livestock. None of these things, however, are exciting to him—and none of them prove to his father that he is growing up. That’s why Freedom wants to work with the Underground Railroad. Eventually, unexpectedly, he gets that chance. With the help of his Quaker friend, Liza Prescott, Freedom leads a family of runaways to safety, proving not only to himself, but also his father, that he is ready to be counted as a man.

*Come Morning* illustrates themes of ethics (slavery), morals (lying and stealing), responsibility, trust, and love. Guccione has fashioned a believable story with a *Little House on the Prairie* flavor. She draws the reader into the lives of her characters and makes the pages fly by with suspense. This story will be particularly effective in the classroom. Because slavery was an event of the past, putting history in story form allows students to feel the anxieties and fears of people in different situations. Guccione also helps to remove the "dumb slave" stereotype because both Freedom and his father are very intelligent. As the father tells his son: "It takes a smart man to act like he ain’t." Clearly, Freedom is a symbolic character; he represents the change for slaves in Delaware and the legacy left by his people.

Reviewed by Tom Wright

Twelve-year-old Frisk Tilden finds not only a summer job but also the surprising opportunity to become the local pool champion! Under-age and out-of-place, Frisk works hard to land a job in the small town of Wilma and works even harder to earn the local pool hall clientele’s respect as the “back room manager.” After hours, Frisk gets some pool pointers from Dan Breedon, the local pool master. These are put to good use when Frisk finds himself substituting for Dan in the annual Wilma Eight-Ball Tournament.

Hite paints a convincing picture of Wilma—a single street, one-hardware-store-town—that rural Americans can readily visualize. He also avoids heavy handedness in describing a young boy with no father and a mother working hard to make ends meet. The story moves quickly, with emphasis on Frisk’s cerebral approach to a number of challenges and his desire to help his mother with the purchase of their own home.

*An Even Break*, though not as ambitious as *Dither Farm*, is nonetheless well-written and entertaining for its young readers.

★★★★


Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Dani and Sara are best friends, with enough differences to balance one another, living in the far future. This future is an age when no one goes outside, and Dani’s fascination for horses comes only from holographs, since there are no living horses left to be seen. When Sara’s ecologically militant grandmother proposes a working trip to the North Pole, Sara is appalled; but, Dani and their brothers are elated at the chance to come along. In a wry twist of fate, Dani, Sara, and grandmother’s adversary are the ones who are catapulted into the past, in spite of the boys’ experiments with converging time lines at the Pole.

The idea of our world changed beyond recognition unless we act before it is too late, is not new—but is one that continues to intrigue. However, Katz seems not quite sure which horse (or holograph?) to ride, and the story suffers in continuity and character development as a result. Science fiction like this—moderately interesting but slow to develop—leaves the fiction reader unsatisfied, and the science reader feeling disgruntled.

Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Sophie has long known her mission in life. She will be a lady farmer. She already has a dog, Puddle, and a cat, Tom, as well as other assorted small creatures. Now that she is seven, she feels the need to move on—to a pony. What with riding lessons, a farming unit at school on which to keep the teacher straight, a visit from great-aunt Al, and getting engaged to Andrew, Sophie manages to lead a full and fascinating life, while keeping the adults around her hopping.

Written in a straight forward style with a good bit of humor, this story will keep lower grade readers nodding at Sophie’s determination and laughing along with her as she forges ahead.

★★★★


Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

Lovely Miss Spider is wooed by two suitors: a homely, shy, kind and intelligent spider named Holley; and a handsome, smooth-talking, arrogant, and cruel spider named Spiderus Reeves. Miss Spider is not deceived by Reeves, and she bravely stops Reeves in his murderous designs on Holley. Though Holley is unhurt, the shock of meeting this brute leaves him in a coma for three days. After nursing Holley back to consciousness, Miss Spider accepts his proposal of marriage, and they plan a most elegant wedding.

This unusual book of verse celebrates true love between sympathetic, gentle souls. The words flow, making the book an excellent choice for read-aloud. The fancy font compliments the story well, but might be hard for younger readers to decipher. The illustrations are done in oils on paper and are amazingly rich and vivid. Children will surely find Kirk’s imaginative creatures fascinating. In spite of its romantic, sentimental subject, the book works well. It is charming, humorous, frightening and sweet. With artistic skill as both poet and artist, Kirk has created a book like no other.

★★★★

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol16/iss5/4
Dorling Kindersley Visual Encyclopedia has enough pictures and facts to keep kids "oohing" and "aahing" for hours. The reference work is well organized—not identical, but similar to the Dewey Decimal classification system. Eleven main thematic headings and over two hundred subheadings are illustrated with over fifteen thousand photographs and artworks. The plethora of visuals (photographs, illustrations, charts, and graphs) keeps in-depth information to a minimum—each subject gets only one to two pages of coverage.

Instruction on using the book, a contents guide, an index, and several credit lists are included. No credit is given to a specific person on the subject pages, which makes it impossible to pinpoint who is responsible for errors. For instance, the "moose" and "caribou" definitions are both illustrated by the same moose rendering, even though caribou look like large reindeer. One cannot assess if this is a computer, consultant, or artist error.

This encyclopedia should not replace standard multi-volume encyclopedia sets; however, librarians and parents should consider the title for purchase. The enticing visuals and fun facts will draw readers.


Gamma Lee lives in a cozy little valley—the best place in the world, but she wonders what the rest of the world is like. She remembers a place her great-grandmother told her about when she was a child. It was up high in the mountains where the river begins and was called the Gates of the Wind. She packs up her things and travels for days. Finally she comes to a place high in the cliffs where the river is only a thread, blown by the wind into a veil of mist. She builds a hut and plants a garden, but the wind beats them down and tries to drive her away. She builds and plants again; however, this time she uses materials and plants like those around her. She blends into the mountainside and makes the wind her friend.

The poetic prose makes this a perfect read-aloud book, while the highly detailed art work will make students want to hold the book in their hands and turn the pages themselves. The textural richness of the story and the illustration compliment each other very well. Each page is a sophisticated mix of watercolor, acrylic, pencil and pastel. Pictures and story together are grand.

* 3+ FI PB

Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

In 1896 Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall were shocked that so many birds were being killed to decorate ladies' hats. They were dismayed at the loss of life and afraid that women would never get to vote as long as they were so silly as to wear dead birds on their heads. So the two women organized the Massachusetts Audobon Society. They persuaded many other women to stop wearing wild life on their hats. Working with men, women, and children, they were able to have national laws passed that protected birds. When they found out that some people were still ignoring the laws, the society helped discover and bring to justice the law-breaking offenders.

This is a rare find—historical fiction in a picture book, written and illustrated with such humor and insight that kids will love it and learn at the same time. Lasky includes a note at the end of the book explaining the history behind the story and what adaptations she made to create it. The illustrations are done in water color and ink, and demonstrate Catrow's expertise in political cartooning and his love for birds.


A K-6 PT

Reviewed by Jan Staheli

*Tic-Tac-Toad*

A Turkey and a Toad were playing
Tic-tac-toe in Texas.
The Turkey said, "I'll take the O's,
And you can have the X's."

But Armadillo scratched the game
That Turtle cleaned and dusted,
Which made the Toad and Turkey tic-Tac-totally disgusted.

Such tongue-twisting alliteration and comical imagery characterize the poems in *Ridicholas Nicholas*. A delightful collection of poems, some funny and some pensive, this little volume will tickle the fancy of any child who enjoys the comical.
In rhythm, rhyme, and purpose, these poems are new, fast-paced, and engaging—a sure-fire hit for readers of all ages.


Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

Olivia Smith and her pet mink help solve a crime. Some very unusual bears have stolen a plate of chocolate chip cookies from a roadside diner run by an orphanage. The situation is straightened out in a very imaginative and humorous way.

The watercolor illustrations create a fantastic mixture of reality and fantasy that quickly engages the reader, and the story line moves with quirky humor. The author creatively weaves the debates of the orphans and the bears together, as they discuss what course of action they should take in response to each other. Like life, some want one thing, some another, and others are way off base with no clue at all concerning the choices they are facing. Eventually both groups work the problems out and come to an agreement. A surprise ending will make readers chuckle—some people and bears just never get it!


Reviewed by Suzanne Olsen

With help from a neighbor, pre-schooler Rosie plants a surprise garden of pansies for her mother's birthday. She practices her new-found skills of secret-keeping while the flowers grow. When Mom's birthday finally arrives, the flowers have bloomed, and she is thrilled at the surprise. But of course, Rosie is her most favorite flower of all.

The story of the surprise garden will appeal to pre-schoolers, but the text is a little long for their high-speed brains. The pictures are soft, done in pastel, and create a dreamy softness appropriate to the tone of the book.

Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

Joseph Martin was fifteen-years-old when the Revolutionary War broke out. Like most of the young men of his day, he was quite anxious to join the army. He had been living with his older grandparents since the age of seven, and was in need of adventure. When he first signed up in June of 1776, he did not realize that it would be seven long years before the war was over and he could return to his family home in Connecticut. Nor did he foresee the hardships that would befall him and all others who served so long and faithfully. There was never a question of giving up and going home. The major trial in his soldier life was the lack of food and clothing, which becomes a continuous theme throughout the entire book.

*Yankee Doodle Boy*, a simplified version of the actual autobiography of Joseph Plumb Martin (originally published under the title *Private Yankee Doodle* in 1962 and under this title in 1964), is arranged by campaigns—one chapter for every year of the war. Although very detailed at times (one tends to skim towards the end of the book), the humor in the face of extreme affliction and the charm of this young man still comes through. For example, when food became non-existent, he recorded the following:

I do solemnly declare that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood, if that can be called victuals. I saw several of the men roast their old shoes and eat them, and I was afterwards informed by one of the officers' waiters, that some of the officers killed and ate a favorite little dog that belonged to one of them. If this was not "suffering" I request to be informed what can pass under that name. If "suffering" like this did not "try men's souls," I confess that I do not know what could.

Although this book deals with some of the most gruesome details of war, the warmth and personality of Joseph Martin comes through in a most enjoyable and uplifting way. The maps and illustrations by Mays also help to make this book an informative, true picture of the privations and horrors of war.

★★★★
26 Brigham Young University


* 6+ NF Reviewed by Helen Hoopes

For the young reader who finds Shakespeare too hard to understand, this edition of *Stories from Shakespeare* may be the best answer. McCaughrean, a winner of several awards for children’s literature (in England), has created an easy-to-read rendition of 10 separate plays. Starting with a short introduction to Shakespeare and his day, McCaughrean makes even the most difficult-to-follow play understandable to the beginning Shakespearian reader. Each play begins with a list of “The People in the Play” which can be referred to to keep the characters’ identities clear. Sprinkled throughout the pages are direct quotes from the play (with Act and Scene numbers indicated).

The illustrations by Maitland, a distinguished British children’s illustrator, are done in muted watercolors with occasional splashes of bright color and range from the ghoulish to the ridiculous, from the sympathetic to the tragic. Visually, he has masterfully captured the rhymes and rhythms of Shakespeare at his best.

At times, the plots seem to be too involved, but so, too, were Shakespeare’s. This illustrated version is a superb introduction to the great Bard himself.

★★★★


A K-4 NF PB Reviewed by Bonnie Walker

Perfectly matched pictures and minimalist verse describe this bright treatment of puffins and penguins for the young child. McMillan photographs and writes captions to fit the essence of each picture in a fast-moving panorama of these little-known birds. McMillan has written more than 30 books for children and teaches university courses in writing, illustrating, and publishing children’s books. He travels widely to create his photo illustrations. Maps penned with India ink are included at the end of the book with more details about each bird. He brings these birds to life with his succinct pictures and concise verse.

*Puffins Climb, Penguins Rhyme* is a very valuable picture book to excite children about wildlife and acquaint them with minimalist verse that is simple enough to try on their own. The colorful, bright photos will catch their attention and help explain the rhyming verses. This book would be a great asset for teachers and parents to teach and create interest in young minds about words and birds.

★★★★

**A 8+ FI**

Reviewed by Tom Wright

Alexandra is unable to find herself in a suffocating relationship with Cliff. She thinks: “This wasn’t how to deal with Cliff. . . . If she kept defending herself Cliff would only get angrier. . . . He couldn’t help how he behaved. . . . Best to humor him, let him get that rage and fear out. . . . It was up to the woman to keep the peace, right?” Unfortunately, these rationalizations prove ineffective as Cliff, the star high school athlete, manipulates, controls, abuses, and finally rapes Alexandra. Alexandra continues to look for explanations where there are none until it’s too late.

Miklowitz has revisited the subject of rape (*Did You Hear What Happened to Andrea?*) with this gripping story of a young, sensitive, fifteen-year-old girl. Miklowitz avoids sensationalizing the subject, and the story rings true as it moves towards an ending that the captivated reader would like to prevent. A portrait of an abusive family, in Cliff’s case, and an overly patriarchal one in Alexandra’s allows the reader to empathize with the young girl’s plight. This thoughtful treatment can offer young people an examination of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. It may also give them license to take more control over their own destiny—something that was so difficult for Alexandra.

★★★★


**B Pre-2 NF PB**

Reviewed by Rita Christensen

“Quack.” At times, a child’s first word! Why? Because many children hear “quacking” as they grow up. Some mothers and fathers sing “Five Little Ducks,” a rhyme about meandering young ducks who leave their mother, to their babies. Parents and teachers sing and read several different versions of this rhyme to children. The main stanza of the rhyme used by Paparone reads:

Five little ducks went *out* one day,
Over the *hills* and far away.

Many school children currently sing the stanza as:

Five little ducks went *swimming* one day,
Over the *pond* and far away.
It makes more sense for the ducks to swim over a pond rather than to wander out over the hills; however, the illustrations are so nicely rendered that the lesser known verses may go unnoticed by most readers.

Pastel colored acrylic paint and pencil are used in a naive Americana style that give the illustrations a simple and familiar feel. Mother duck and her ducklings are pleasantly portrayed in the countryside among animals, fruit, trees, gardens, toys, and household items.

Preschool children will be thrilled to identify everyday objects and to see a favorite singing rhyme in pictures. In addition, the repetition of verse may be helpful to the beginning reader. *Five Little Ducks: An Old Rhyme* is a worthy purchase for libraries and parents in need of more books for the young child.


Reviewed by Jan Staheli

This is the life story of a gun—a remarkable rifle made by a master craftsman at the time of the American Revolution. As Paulsen explains:

Now and then, with great rarity, there came a blending of steel and wood and brass and a man's knowledge into one rifle, when it all came together just . . . exactly . . . right and a weapon of such beauty and accuracy was born that it might be actually worshiped. Such rifles were called "sweet" and were, almost literally, priceless.

This "sweet" rifle sees action against the British and is so deadly accurate that British officers begin to be required to write their wills before going into battle. Then, for more than 200 years, the rifle is cached away and forgotten. Then one day a man discovers the gun once more and the weapon makes its way to Harv Kline's mantel, becoming a work of art more than just a piece of artillery—that is, until it discharges with deadly effect.

This is a well-written book, dedicated to refuting the suggestion that guns don't kill people, rather, people kill people. It gives eerie life to the beautiful weapon and makes lethal sense as the story presses inexorably to its climax. The reader knows what will happen and cannot do anything to stop the inevitable tragedy. Every child or adult who loves guns and has access to them in the home needs to read this story.

Reviewed by William Baer

Children are fascinated by the world around them and want to know more about what they see and hear. How do eyes see? Why doesn’t food taste the same when you have a stuffy nose? What causes earthquakes? The answers to these questions and many more are contained in *Science.* This encyclopedia includes over 100 entries, divided up into five major categories: astronomy, biology, earth science, human biology, and chemistry and physics. Each entry includes a brief description, pictures with captions, cross-references, and many examples. A glossary gives simple definitions for many terms found in the book.

Rubel does a good job of presenting the material in an easy-to-understand way without lessening the validity of the information. For instance, the entry “Space Flight” gives a brief history of space flight from Sputnik to a modern space station. The entry also includes an illustration showing the path a spacecraft would take going to and returning from the moon. Captions explain what would take place at various stages of the journey. *Science* is an excellent choice for any elementary school library.


Reviewed by Rita Christensen

God makes dog biscuits. If this little-known fact has readers wondering, they can find out more by reading *Dog Heaven.* Dog heaven has everything a dog could want: fields, lakes, geese to chase, children to play with, clouds to sleep on, good homes, and even biscuits (yes, made by God, Himself) in the form of cats, squirrels, sandwiches, and ice cream cones. Dogs in heaven don’t forget their earthly memories. They are allowed to visit their old stomping grounds with angels, and when old pals come to heaven, they are met at the gate by their old friends.

Rylant’s first attempt at both writing and illustrating should appeal to younger readers. The childlike paintings vibrate off the page with primary and secondary colors applied in acrylics. As usual, Rylant is reliable in her textual treatment of a sensitive subject. Children who believe in heaven, who are dealing with the death of a pet or loved one, or with the concept of death itself, will find *Dog Heaven* comforting.
$15.95. 30 pp.

B 1+ FI PB

**Reviewed by Marie Orton**

*Papa Gatto* is a richly illustrated retelling of an Italian folktale in which a father cat, the prince’s trusted advisor, seeks someone to care for his eight motherless kittens. First, the beautiful Sophia comes, but she is lazy and selfish, and Papa Gatto soon dismisses her. Sophia’s plain step-sister, Beatrice, then secretly comes to care for the kittens, and of course, is the exact inverse of Sophia. When the prince begins to look for a wife, Papa Gatto suggests Beatrice. The wicked Sophia pretends to be Beatrice in order to marry the prince, but Papa Gatto uncovers the deception in the end.

Sanderson, the author and illustrator, combines elements from several traditional tales into this good sister/wicked step-sister fairy tale, and even adds a final twist of her own: Beatrice tells the prince she cannot marry him until she knows him better. Sanderson’s rhythmic prose, like her illustrations, is rich in detail, and so requires some summarization when reading to preschool age children. The fifteen full-page illustrations, all intricate oil paintings, are certainly the book’s most attractive point. The book’s cover has the most elaborate illustration, but unfortunately, not all the other illustrations are as detailed or as carefully crafted.

 pena


* 4+ NF BI

**Reviewed by Leah Hanson**

Using the familiar ABC format and the artistic work of Henri Matisse, Sellier creates a masterful, captivating biography of one of the greatest and most influential modern artists of our time. Beginning with "Appendicite" (appendicitis), Sellier relates how Matisse was drawn to painting when he was bed-ridden after a case of appendicitis. Other letters of the alphabet relate influences, important works, and styles of Matisse. "Z for Zenith" concludes both the remarkable life of the artist and this biography.

*Matisse from A to Z* is a fascinating, enjoyable way to introduce young children to art and art history. Younger readers will enjoy Matisse’s art and the conventional ABC format. Older readers will appreciate the creative tapestry woven by the story of the artist’s life, his work, and the alphabet. The use of French words, as the ABC markers, adds yet another twist to this engaging book. And of course, the opportunity to pore over page after page of artistic masterpieces, makes this small biography a grand addition to any collection.

Reviewed by Tom Wright

In Hadra’s small Israeli village, where there is one nurse, one doctor, one grocer, one everything, Hadra wants to be the one and only flier. From Monsieur Maurice, the shoemaker, she learns of the “patience” and “discipline” necessary to undertake the daunting feat of flight. While watching him at his trade, she hears tales of the circus on his native island of Djerba and its acrobats, elephants, and “flying Jews.” Hadra’s desire to fly is all-consuming and, though she must inevitably be earthbound, she learns to deal with her identity as the one and only motherless child in this arid, citrus-growing village.

Semel’s prose is well-measured and captivating. It is impressive that the quality is not lost in this translation by Halkin. Young readers may miss some metaphysical inferences, but will appreciate a colorful cast of characters—from the oppressive husband-seeking Tova to young Arele, a budding naturalist whose stutter is lost when he speaks of his passion. In a phrase that the author coins frequently, these characters are each a “one and only.”

There is a unique feel to this work. Semel puts together a series of short vignettes, which taken collectively, give the reader a glimpse at the pain and loneliness that people share, as well as the strength and love that they possess to overcome tragedy.


Reviewed by William Baer

**nocturnal** Active during the night. Most bats are nocturnal as are a number of other animals.

Along with simple definitions such as the above, Simon often incorporates examples, illustrations, or word origins in the entries in his latest reference work, *Science Dictionary.* "Nocturnal" is just one of over 2,000 words from "abacus” to “zygote” described in this vivid dictionary. Biographies of famous scientists, and charts like the periodic table, common weights and measures, and a key to understanding weather maps have also been included to aide young readers in their quest for scientific knowledge.

The definitions in *Science Dictionary* are clear and refreshing. Although best used as a reference book, readers will probably find it enjoyable to simply browse from one definition to the next.

**C 2-5 NF**

Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Recipes and craft activities for five thematic birthday parties are prefaced by suggestions on the easiest recipes, crafts, and tips on nutrition and safety. Color photographs brightly display the food and projects for each party.

Although the author recommends starting with easier recipes and crafts, the step-by-step instructions could use more illustrations to help the young crafter. Some crafts, such as the cosmic candy cup and the pizza pizzazz party invitation, are much too complicated for second and third graders and even for some adults. A few recipes could be managed by lower elementary school children; however, most crafts would require considerable adult supervision—more than one teacher could provide in a classroom.

★★★★


**B 6+ FI**

Reviewed by Bonnie Walker

Mandy’s grief when her father is killed in the war causes her to be defensive when her mother must move in with Aunt Bess into Parrish Grove in order to obtain needed employment. Urgency to buy the house her father was hoping to purchase in her home town of Garnet Creek, trying to accept and believe in new high school friends, and dealing with the demands of Aunt Bess, all combine to make Mandy angry and aloof. Her chore of gathering her aunt’s sheep each night causes her to be wary at first. Then as lambs are born, and later a sheep breaks a leg, feelings of fascination, concern, and responsibility are developed. Dealing with challenges at school, while she still harbors hurts and anxieties creates a pall of non-acceptance. Defending her younger brother against a bully, wanting the bell rope restored, and saving money for a school map are a few of the dilemmas she faces. A boy who steals, a box social, and June’s example add to her own quandary. Finally, Mandy’s persistence over the dream house expends her mother’s patience and causes an outpouring of her mother’s own disappointment and anger which causes Mandy to run off during a driving storm. The turmoil within herself, the confrontation with her mother, and the storm that threatens the sheep must all be resolved as the book draws to an end.
34 Brigham Young University

Willis does a good job of creating the characters and situations that make this book a worthwhile story dealing with losses and growing up. There are some enjoyable boy-girl relationships which are fun for the young teenagers. This is a well done, easily handled story about becoming a better person and learning from challenges.

★★★★