Book Reviews

Authors

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* Pre+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Big Bro is coming! He's big, tough, and mean. Mouse is scared to death of him. He warns the frog that he's coming, who warns the parrot, who warns the chimpanzee, who warns the elephant. They all sit shivering and waiting, and waiting, and waiting for Big Bro to show. Mouse finally agrees to go and see how far away he is. Mouse returns in sheer terror. He's nearly here! All the animals nearly faint in anticipation of Big Bro's arrival.

The book contains magnificent pictures and a twist ending that will leave you laughing. It also makes a great read-a-loud. The author's picture books for children feature rhyming texts and exaggerated drawings of animals in humorous settings. His stories teach simple lessons. Alborough uses lots of color and cartoon-like drawings, and he has written numerous books with bears starring in the title roles. This is a Utah Children's Picture Book Award Nominee for 1998-99.


A 2-5 FI PB Reviewed by Sarah Fisher

Needing money for Halloween costumes, the Beartown cubs are delighted when they are all offered a job helping Farmer Ben with the daily chores. When a dishonest businessman moves in with his big-time grocery store, Ben’s farm is threatened. Willing to do anything to save Farmer Ben and their jobs, the cubs come up with the
6 Brigham Young University

perfect idea to raise enough money to spare the farm—a Halloween Festival, featuring a haunted hayride! When they finally convince Farmer Ben to hold the festival, the whole town pitches in to help. A success, the festival brings in enough money to save the farm and helps put the criminal grocer where he belongs—in jail.

A “Big Chapter Book,” the Haunted Hayride is the perfect length for the budding reader. With interesting illustrations and believable situations, this book is sure to be enjoyed by young readers. It is suspenseful and fun to read, a very appropriate addition to the classroom or home library.


Sid is angry that his mother and father have separated. He is especially angry at his father, who has left. Things are somewhat the same at school and with his friends, although Sid spends more time alone now. One Saturday he is supposed to go spend the weekend with his father. The rest of the story is one of anger, reconciliation, and the realization that although things have changed, and are more difficult, his dad loves him, and Sid can love his father too.

This is a story of a child dealing with the breakup of his family. It tells honestly and simply what happens in the life and the heart of a little child when faced with such a challenge. It would be a good book for children to read who are going through separation or divorce, or for children who need to understand another child in this situation. The words and sentence structure are simple. The story is told frankly. The beautiful watercolor illustrations tell half the story. As in real life, there are no easy answers or complete solutions in this book. There are just lives changed and the process of dealing with it. The story could be a lead-in to a discussion on marriage, divorce, and families.


Against Gabriel’s orders and to the shock of her angel friends, a shy, little angel refuses to join the visit to the newborn baby. Defiant but near tears, she watches from above as shepherds, lambs, wise men, innkeeper, and angels gather around the baby.

A clever storyline and equally clever watercolor-and-acrylic illustrations bring a surprise ending that will delight young and older readers alike. A welcomed selection for gift-giving and adding to Christmas storybook collections in school and public libraries.

A  K-4  FI  Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

A terrible storm tosses “Ducky,” along with 29,000 other plastic bathtub toys, overboard from a ship bound from Hong Kong to Tacoma, Washington. The crate they are packed in breaks. The many animals are set adrift in the middle of a restless ocean. Danger and loneliness lurk everywhere in the huge ocean expanse. Ducky is terrified of the monstrous shark chasing him. He wishes he could swim or fly away. Day after day the only thing he can do is float. He watches his other bathtub friends float away one by one. Will he ever see land or friends again?

The actual event this story is based on became a scientific study. The book is magnificently illustrated with crisply cut collage images intermixed with detailed watercolor backdrops. Ducky’s bright yellow hue draws the attention of readers’ eyes as the fate of little “Ducky” unfolds in this charming and creative maritime adventure.


A  3-8  FI  PB  Reviewed by Rachael W. Galvez

Ten-year-old James is excited to “prove himself” so that he can join a neighborhood “club.” He brings his little brother along, because he is responsible for taking care of him while their mother works evenings. He goes along with the dare to spraypaint on a freeway sign, but grows uneasy when members of the club mention the “take-it” game they play in the mini-market. When the group cross paths with a real gang of older kids, James realizes the danger he is getting himself and his brother into. When a member of the club comes over the next day to offer James a Lakers cap that signifies he is “in,” James courageously declines.

The message of this book is clear: kids can make the choice not to become part of the gang culture. It is also startling, because it reveals how early in life many children have to make such a choice, and what strong influences they must resist. The portrayal of the relationship between James and Isaac is also marvelous, showing the way Isaac looks up to James, while James watches out for Isaac. Knowing that Isaac will follow whatever he does, James makes a decision that will save both of them from a lot of trouble. The illustrations, done in oil paint, give a vibrant reality and deep personality to the story as well.


A  5+  FI  Reviewed by Tom Wright

This story is woven around the Warm Springs Apaches and the events of 1879 in the New Mexico Territory. Their chief, Victorio, decided to fight authorities rather than live on the barren San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. Walks Alone is a fifteen-year-old girl who faces extraordinary deprivations as her people are hunted and murdered. She is separated from her people during an attack by Apache scouts working for the “White Eyes.” The rest of the tale follows her attempts to track and rejoin them.

Burks does a good job of integrating Apache lore, customs, and history into this riveting story. The reader gets a good feel for Apache attachment to land and family. There is only the Apache view in this story. Other works might try to introduce sympathetic characters from the other culture, but the “White Eyes” are depicted as heartless killers who have no mercy. A bibliography of historical works on Victorio and Apaches is included.
Two tiny mice, Jack and Lottie, have one big problem—"That Cat." Angus is always tormenting the mice; Christmas morning, their stockings are empty and a note reads, "NOT HERE--GON AWAY FOR CRISMUS." The mice decide to consult the wise rat Ton-Chee, and on their way they find a sleigh bell. A secret conference with Ton-Chee results in the bell being wrapped as a belated Christmas present for Angus. Mrs. Mackie, Angus' owner, ties the bell around Angus' neck to his discomfort and consternation. "It may not have been a very merry Christmas' said Jack, 'but it does look like a Happy New Year!'"

This humorous "belling of the cat" story is complemented by delightful bright watercolor illustrations that capture the personalities of the cat and wise rat. Butterworth effectively uses footprints and shadowing elements outside the boundaries of the illustrations to portray the scampering of the mice and the menacing nature of the cat. The book covers are tied together with a red satin ribbon, which also secures a bell-shaped tag. This feature will not be a problem if the book is intended for an individual child but will not work well on public and school library shelves.


Long ago in Korea, when there was no sun or moon, people lit their homes with oil lamps. Because the land teemed with wild animals that frightened the people—the tiger being the most feared of all—the children were warned to always keep the door closed to strangers. One day a woman had to leave her children alone while she went to the market. She told them she would be back when the oil in the lamp was gone. On her way home from the market, the woman encountered a fearsome tiger who demanded one of the corn cakes she was carrying before he would let her pass by. One by one the tiger ate all the corn cakes and then swallowed the woman, because she had nothing left to feed him. To further satisfy his appetite, the still hungry tiger was determined to find the woman's children, so he dressed in her clothing and set out in search of them. At home, as the children awaited their mother's return, there was a knock at the door. It was the tiger! He tricked them into opening the door, then chased them out into the night. They scrambled up a tree, the tiger not far behind. Fearing for their lives, the children pled for help, and miraculously, a long rope fell from the sky. They grabbed hold and were lifted up and away from danger, up to the very top of the sky where their mother was waiting for them. "There should always be enough light for people to stay safe from danger," the woman tells her children. The little girl becomes the sun, "bathing the world in light," while the little boy becomes the moon, and the mother the stars, casting a pale light over the earth all night long.

The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy is beautifully retold and illustrated with soft, luminous paintings that allow the spirit of this tale to flow easily from the author to the reader. In retelling this well-loved tale, Choi has chosen to honor the memory of her storyteller grandmother, as well as the tiger, an important part of Korean folklore. A good read aloud at home, in the classroom, or during a library story hour.
Dear Dr. King
Letters from Today’s Children to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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* 3-6 PB NF Reviewed by Rachael W. Galvez

After talking to their classes about Martin Luther King Jr., a group of Memphis, Tennessee teachers ask their students to write letters to Dr. King. The students ask questions, share feelings about King’s life and death, give thanks for improvements in race relations, and express their desires for greater peace in the future. From the many letters generated in the project, a select group are interspersed in the book with historic photographs of King’s time and pictures of today’s children. Each letter is formatted uniquely by varying type size, font, color, and layout to create a book that is visually exciting.

The letters range from affirmative to heartbreaking, as the children offer a personal evaluation about the ways in which King’s dream has come true, as well as areas in which there is still much work to be done. For example, Scott, age 12, writes:

Today after my class went outside, we came in and we were allowed to drink from the same water fountain—all because of you. We got to work on the computers together—all because of you. We went to lunch together and sat at the same table and stood in the same line and ate the same lunches—all because of you. Thank you, Dr. King, you changed the world.

Erin, age 11, writes of another side of modern life:

If you were alive today you would go into shock. Some people are scared to go for a walk in their own neighborhoods. They are also scared because of drive-by shootings. Kids are also dropping out of school. They think school is not important. How else are they going to get a job somewhere else than Burger King? I wish you were here to help these people.

The power of this book is immeasurable, and it would be a very valuable part of any school or home study of Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights, race relations, or peace versus violence.


B 5+ FI Reviewed by Wendy Bishop

The dilemma in DeClements book Liar, Liar is whether Marybelle, a new move-in, will win friends by telling lies about a competition. The reader will not be without compassion for Marybelle, who is poor and does not make friends easily. It’s true she cannot afford the cutest clothes or provide the funnest playthings, but she tries hard to include herself anyway and resorts to deceit when the girls do not respond.
It's hard to believe Gretchen's friends would believe Marybelle. After all, Gretchen has lived in the neighborhood for years and shares all her secrets with Susan. Why would Susan suddenly avoid her and not allow her to come visit her at home? To fill the void, Gretchen makes friends with another girl, but curiosity about Susan's shunning keeps Gretchen hunting for clues.

With the help of her older brother, Gretchen finds out why the lies have been told. Although Gretchen struggles with forgiveness, she manages to rid herself of debilitating anger.

Near the end of the story, an interesting twist will leave the reader convinced that it doesn't pay to lie. Although boys will think the story too emotional and wonder what's the big deal, both genders will understand the overwhelming feeling of being alone and friendless.

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Reviewed by Tom Wright

Here is a reincarnation (partial pun intended) of Richard Peck's Blossom Culp character. Modern-day sixth-grader Allie Nichols is not quite the rambunctious renegade that Blossom was, but she does have grit, and this book is a very good read. Allie finds herself befriended by the ghost of a girl whose spirit demands justice before she can rest. Like Peck's *The Ghost Belonged to Me*, only bits and pieces of the redemptive mystery are revealed at a time, keeping the protagonist and the reader on the edge of their seats.

The whole story involves greed, deception, and murder. The suspense builds very well and leads to a (literally) cliff-hanging climax. Along the way, DeFelice manages to deal with some typical "friendship" problems that sixth-graders face. A charming book that most young readers will certainly enjoy.

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* 3+ NF Reviewed by Kathe C. Homer

*A Christmas Carol* has become a classic for most families. The editors of this version have made it enticing to children with a text abridgement based on the one Dickens used for his public readings. The book is full of sidebars with photographs, paintings, and many facts about London in Dickens' time. The sidebars bring the times and story to life, explaining words, ideas, places, and things mentioned in the text that children (and adults) might not otherwise understand.

This is an excellent version of *A Christmas Carol*. Children and adults alike will love the reading. It would be a marvelous addition to a collection of Christmas books. Any teacher who is using *A Christmas Carol* in their coursework should have it!

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Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Each of the books in the series *Cooking Throughout American History* is nicely done. They are not just recipe books, but also include a brief history of the time period and foods the people used. There is also pronunciation for the harder or unfamiliar words. This series is written on a second-or third-grade reading level but will
be of interest to older children. The author uses authentic terms for food, such as "grub" and "chuck." The books have a glossary and an index.

These books would be excellent to include in a history unit on any one of the periods listed.

★ ★ ★ ★


A 6-8 FI Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Natalie first met Tulip in the cornfield. Standing there motionless, holding a kitten, she looked more like a scarecrow than a young girl. New to the neighborhood and wanting to belong to a gang, Natalie blurts out, "Do you want to be friends?" However, friendship with the cruel, friendless Tulip comes with a price. Held in her magical grasp, Natalie clings to the ragged-haired Tulip, turning away from the other girls in her class. Tulip has an amazing ability to get away with everything. Even her wildest stories are almost believable. Dad calls it the "Tulip Touch." Forbidden to go to her house, Natalie hangs around the Palace, the elegant old hotel her father manages, waiting desperately for Tulip to show up. They become inseparable, constantly playing one of the many games Tulip so skillfully invents, such as Stinking Mackerel, Rats in a Firestorm, or Road of Bones. Once quiet, innocent pastimes, Tulip's games become vicious, morbid, and even dangerous. Childish pranks become cruel and humiliating. Yet Natalie stays with Tulip, rejecting her teachers' and parents' attempts to help her find safer friendships.

Drawn into Tulip's twisted world, peopled by a violent, abusive father and a timid, apologetic mother, Natalie becomes Tulip in secret. On the outside she remains the same obligingly sweet child, while inside she silently swears and rages, just as Tulip does openly. Natalie justifies this relationship by seeing herself as Tulip's protector. It is she who tears up the rude Christmas cards, pleads with Tulip to put down that poor rabbit, begs Tulip to leave the freshly painted lavatory alone, and keeps Tulip's trash-bin fires to just one. Natalie needs to keep Tulip out of trouble, until that last "wild night" when they torch the chicken shed. Tulip's spell over Natalie is suddenly broken as the fire explodes and "scorches the sky." Natalie knows now that she has to get away from Tulip, but she also knows that doing so will cause Tulip to play the most dangerous game of all.

With its innocent beginning and tragic ending, this is a compelling story about a friendship. Tulip gives everyone a small glimpse inside herself, yet "no one reaches out a hand, no one tries to touch her." *The Tulip Touch* is masterfully written by an author who knows adolescents.

★ ★ ★ ★


A 6+ FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

At first this seemed like a book of short stories. The first chapter is the sad story of a boy who doesn't fit into his private prep school. He crashes a party and is humiliated by both the boy he wants to impress and the girl he wants to date. He leaves the party very drunk and depressed. The more he drives, the more he is convinced that he will never fit in. Finally he decides to end it all and drives the car into what the reader thinks is a fatal crash.

The second chapter is about two girls. One girl is "into" boys and the other is not. They visit an elaborate whirligig at the top of a cliff near their homes. The whirligig is supposed to have magic powers and be able to predict the future. The two girls have a great time describing the boys of their dreams and watching the whirligig's answers.

The third chapter goes back to the boy. We find out that he did not die in the crash, but a beautiful, young, talented girl did. The boy is even more depressed, and even though his rich parents try to keep him out of jail, he realizes he needs to make restitution. The girl's mother explains that the girl had hoped to visit every state in the United States, where her bright, cheerful attitude would have been felt. Now she can't, but one of the things that had brought much joy in her life was a
whirligig her grandfather had given her. She challenges the boy to visit the four corners of the United States and make a whirligig for each spot. She gives him a summer bus pass, and he begins his odyssey.

The rest of the book tells how the boy selects where the whirligigs will go and how they are made. Somewhere in the book is also a chapter about how they affect the lives of someone who passes them.

This is a thoroughly delightful book, and even though I was confused by the format at first, by the third chapter I was hooked.

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A Pre+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Venice is known as the city of music. You hear arias in the opera houses, cantatas in the churches, and songs in the street everywhere you go. One little girl, Gabriella, even hears music in the cries of merchants, the flapping of wash on the line, pigeon wings moving on the wind, and her mother calling her home—everywhere. All these sounds mingle and become a song. She begins humming, and soon her catchy little melody is picked up by the baker, widow, gondolier, and even school children. Pretty soon Gabriella's song is being sung throughout Venice. One day a frustrated composer hears the song and decides it is just what he needs for the orchestra.

The day it is first played a hush falls over the audience, and the "music soared and swirled. It climbed it curled." It grows into a heart-stopping crescendo. After the music stops, the composer admits that it is not his song, but one he heard from school children, who admit they heard it from the gondolier, who admits he heard it from the widow, who admits she heard it from the baker, who admits he heard it first from Gabriella. Childlike pictures help make this a very appealing story.


B 4-6 FI Reviewed by Sarah Fisher

Kate is forced to do the absolute worst thing ever: move! She leaves sunny California, as well as her best friend, Molly, her gorgeous boyfriend, and her fifth-grade class. She is trading everything familiar for dreary, snowy, Belletoona, Pennsylvania. Luckily, she has "Operation Defrost." Kate may hate everything about Belletoona, but as soon as she raises enough money she heads back to Isla Nada to live with Molly. When she finally gets there, California and her friends are not all they used to be. After going back home and making several friends in her new town, Kate decides that Belletoona isn't so bad after all.

Freeman does a good job of getting into the mind of her main character. Kate's thoughts and feelings, as well as the dialogue between characters, are accurate and typical of fifth graders in the 1990s. However, some of the characters use too much California slang, which
detracts from the storyline. If you can get past the “chica’s” and “like’s,” it is a can’t-put-down book sure to be enjoyed by fourth- or fifth-grade readers.

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* Pre-3 PB FI Reviewed by Sarah Fisher

Murray is going to be late for school, but things are not going well. His pants just do not want to be put on! First, they jump around on his bed and then hop onto his head. Next, they dash away. Murray’s socks try to help, but to no avail. Up go the pants to swing from the light fixture, and neither Murray’s brand new gorilla T-shirt nor his cowboy belt can catch the pants. “I’ve been bored,” say the pants. “I’m sick of sitting!” So Murray has an idea. When he tells the pants that he will run, jump, and roll to school, and fill its pockets with wonderful things—even a yo-yo—the pants agree to cooperate, and they all (Murray, socks, shirt, belt, and pants) head to school!

A fun, zany, and imaginative story, *Stop Those Pants!* is sure to become a fast favorite. The detailed ink and oil paint illustrations are bright and fun. The quick-witted pants are sure to keep both child and adult laughing throughout. Just the right style for awakening the imagination, neither the classroom or the home library is complete without this book.

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* Pre-2 PB Reviewed by Kathe C. Homer

On the surface, this is a very simple, beautiful, picture book of the pioneers’ trek west, done in a very poetic style, one “verse” on each page. The book chronicles the sorrow of leaving home behind, the hardships of crossing rivers and dusty deserts, traveling through rain and snow, climbing high mountains and braking down the other side, and dealing with death along the way. It also speaks about the happier parts of the journey with dancing, games, and sleeping under the stars.

The most significant thing about the text, the feeling that the reader comes away with above all else, is the link between the pioneers and their God. Each “verse” ends with that connection: “And asked for God’s help,” “And prayed to have strength,” “And prayed as they toiled,” and the last verse—“And thanked God for his help.”

While the text and the illustrations are very simple, somehow this book is touching for adults as well as for children.

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A Pre+ PB PT Reviewed by Genevieve Nelson

This book is hideously gross yet charming. Greenberg creatively explains the many things one can do with such disgusting creatures as bedbugs, maggots, lice, fleas, termite larvae, and other vermin. Greenberg seems to delight in making readers squirm. He expresses his philosophy with these lines:

Yup, loathe ‘em or adore bugs,
Their’s no way to ignore bugs.  
So even if you hate ‘em,  
Why not investigate ‘em?

This “read it if you dare” book is sure to elicit “Eew!” from most young girls and probably “Cool!” from most young boys.

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Reviewed by Kathe C. Homer

Gregory has produced another sharp look at a specific time and place in American history. The time is 1878. Two boys are left orphans in San Francisco when both of their parents die in an epidemic. The boys run away from the terrible orphanage and manage to get to their uncle’s place—a gold rush boomtown called Bodie Camp, high in the hills almost to the Nevada border. When twelve-year-old Danny finds that his uncle loves a Chinese woman, he refuses to have anything to do with either of them, and instead roams around with the other orphans in Bodie. Only when they faced a life-threatening problem do the boys realize which way their future lies.

As in *The Legend of Jimmy Spoon* and *Earthquake at Dawn*, Gregory has taken a small piece of history and, using both fact and fiction, brought it to life for today’s young readers. This is an exciting, adventurous story about life in the boomtowns of the gold rush days. The characters are very real, and the reader is pulled in to care about what happens to them—from the fictitious orphaned boys and the lovely Chinese woman, to the very real Madame Mustache (Eleanor Dumont) and “Captain” Billy O’Hara, a black man who became the foster father of Bodie. There is a lot of excitement and history to learn about in these few pages.


Reviewed by Tom Wright

Forced by his mother to leave the society of his gentleman friends to live and work with his uncle and the unrefined surfman at a lifesaving station on Cape Cod, sixteen-year-old Daniel learns many hard lessons and grows up in the process. *Shipwreck Season* is an incredible piece of historical fiction. Hill’s extensive research is evident throughout the entire novel. Packed with fascinating details about the United States Life-Saving Service, the precursor to the modern-day Coast Guard, this book is an intriguing look into a little known nineteenth-century occupation.
Despite its outstanding historical quality—a story about a boy's coming of age—this novel falls sadly short. The protagonist, Daniel, is an interesting character whose attitudes contrast to those of the surfman he works with very nicely. Numerous sudden and unexplained changes in Daniel's outlook on his situation and life in general are jarring, making what could have been a nice story harsh and unsatisfying. Even with its significant characterization flaws, the plot is exciting and fast-paced, making it especially appealing to young readers. Overall, Shipwreck Season is a nice addition to the cannon of children's fiction about ships and sailors in the 1800s.


A 5-9 PB Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

President Theodore Roosevelt romped with his children in the White House, but his conservationist views caused him to forbid the cutting of a Christmas tree. In this fictionalized account of an actual incident, the youngest sons, Archie and Quentin, sneak a small tree into their bedroom and hide it in the closet. When the tree is discovered, President Roosevelt takes the boys to see the chief forester, Gifford Pinchot so Pinchot can explain why trees should not be cut. Pinchot suggests that some trees should be cut so that others will grow bigger and stronger. With a "Hoorah!" and "Bully!" from the boys, the Roosevelts return home and finally celebrate Christmas with a tree.

A blended book of fact and fiction, this heart-warming story provides a glimpse of a Christmas celebration in the White House. Young people will respond positively to the antics of the Roosevelt children. Bright, playful gouache illustrations add to the humor of the story. An excellent addition to school and public libraries' Christmas collections.


* 4+ FI Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

After escaping from a youth detention facility, fourteen-year-old Rick is befriended by Lon, a bird biologist, working on a project to reintroduce condors to the wild. The rough terrain and "the Maze" in Canyonlands National Park remind Rick of his life. The death of a condor, a fledgling maverick, helps Rick see the need to temper his yearning for independence. The presence of the condor project is not without opposition: two others want to use the Maze as a cache for illegal weapons. In a tense life-and-death situation, Rick musters the courage of a renegade and succeeds in saving Lon’s life. Through Lon’s unconditional acceptance, Rick gains respect for the condors, nature, and life in general.

The book is rich in symbolism. It succeeds in teaching valuable life lessons without being didactic. The story is fast-paced and suspenseful, difficult to put down. The characters are well developed. Young adults can relate to Rick and his quest to come to grips with his identity. The story begins and ends in the same setting—a courtroom. However, from Rick’s first visit to his second, he has become a new person and learned to cope with his situation thanks to the support of caring adults. The book is an ideal read for a junior high or high school reader—especially those who yearn to be understood.

A K-4 NF Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

We’ve all read about what other animals eat. Do you know what you would do if something tried to eat you? This book explores the fascinating way fourteen different animals avoid the danger of being eaten by other animals. It shows different methods animals use to protect themselves against enemies. Who would guess that one creature defends itself by sticking out its large, bright-blue tongue and wiggling it from side to side? Or that another animal uses its large webbed feet to glide as far as fifty feet to reach another tree?

Using elaborate and intricate paper collages, the illustrator vividly spotlights the animals. A simple leading statement such as “When it feels threatened, the hog-nosed snake . . .” is presented on one page with a cut paper image of a small snake being growled at by a feisty bear that bares large teeth. A flip of the page reveals how its unique defense mechanism helps the snake escape from danger.

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A 4-8 FI Reviewed by Rachel Wadham

After completing the third grade for the fourth time, fifteen-year-old Simon Green sets out to make his fortune in the world by driving one thousand turkeys from Missouri to Denver. With the help of his two mules, an old mule skinner and his dog, a runaway slave, and a sixteen-year-old orphaned girl, Simon’s venture is a success despite many mishaps along the way. With all the action of a western and the humor and style of a tall tale, *The Great Turkey Walk* is an outstanding novel that was inspired by actual nineteenth-century turkey drives. As with her other novels, among them *Gideon and the Mummy Professor*, and *Oh, Those Harper Girls!*, Karr’s outstanding ability to craft a fine novel with nonstop adventure and superb characters is very evident. Subtly woven into the fast-paced plot is a wonderful theme that shows the reader that success depends solely on how much you believe in your dream. An excellent companion to a unit on the American west or tall tales, *The Great Turkey Walk* will appeal to a broad spectrum of young people, from those who enjoy westerns to those who like a story that makes you laugh.


A K-4 PB Reviewed by Janice G. Bunker

Lucy finds a secret door in a wardrobe and spends an afternoon with a mythical faun in a mysterious snowbound land. The text of *Lucy Steps Through the Wardrobe*, taken directly from Lewis' original book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, loses nothing in the adaptation. The full-page colored pencil illustrations are lush with detail and evocative of Lewis’ style of writing. A fascinating book, it holds even five-year-old
attention spans captive. Bring on the rest of the series!


* All NF PB Reviewed by Robert L. Maxwell

Macaulay’s books (City, Pyramid, Cathedral, etc.) are always interesting and unusual, and Rome Antics is certainly not an exception. “Somewhere in the Italian hills, a homing pigeon is released. She soars quickly and follows an old road, which (of course) leads to Rome.” Not your average pigeon, she decides—most unprofessionally—to explore the city a bit before she gets to her destination. She soars through some of Rome’s best known monuments and streets, avoiding dangers along the way (especially Roman cats and little Roman boys), and sees Rome from all possible angles. By the time she arrives she—and we—have had a unique tour of this famous city.

Macaulay’s black ink line drawings of a pigeon’s view of Rome are accentuated on each page by a red line streaking through crevasses and arches, under bridges and through church towers, showing the pigeon’s journey. The monument or area depicted on each page is identified discretely at the bottom, which makes the book interesting to children and adults of all ages. One of the most notable details about this book is the different angles each page is drawn from, including one upside down when the pigeon has accidentally been hit by a soccer ball. At the end are a bird’s eye view map of Rome showing the pigeon’s route and four pages of further explanation about the sites visited—an unusual and fun way to tour Rome.


* 3-6 NF PB Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

This book is everything you want to know about sharks and quite a bit more. There are five sections to this recipe-style handbook: Shocking Shark Stories, Confidential Crime Files, Database Shark Profile, Biology Notes (reproduction), and Ready Reference. Each section contains a wealth of information about these fascinating ocean creatures.

There are approximately 375 species of sharks. They come in all sizes, from a couple of hand-spans long to larger than a bus. Remember, small does not mean harmless. If you ever get into a showdown with a shark—large or small—you can count on its pals joining in.

This book is fascinating reading. You learn how a shark first uses sound to track food and then “follows its (hypersensitive) nose.” Other interesting facts include information on the shark’s sense of touch. While we humans have to be close enough to touch something in order to feel it, a shark can feel things from a long distance away.

With a combination of real photographs, watercolored drawings, and comic-strip artwork, the pictures enhance the stories and facts about sharks. This is a well researched and interesting fact book about one of the ocean’s truly great inhabitants.


B PB Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Clara Maher and her mother are traveling from New York to Utah to meet her father when a blizzard halts the train. Mama refuses to go a hotel but accepts an invitation from fellow passenger Mr. Jones to have Thanksgiving dinner at Brown’s Hole. During the Thanksgiving celebration, Clara recognizes Bob as being Butch Cassidy but dares not tell her proper mother. The Mahers stay with the Jarvie family until the tracks are clear, and they can travel to meet Papa.
In the author’s note, McCully explains that Butch Cassidy and his gang had been cowhands on the Jarvie ranch, and that they did return to host a Thanksgiving feast for their friends at Brown’s Hole in the 1890s. Clara and her mother are added to this fictionalized account and Clara tells the story. Although the story is entertaining, the ending is disappointing and anti-climatic. McCully’s beautiful watercolor illustrations complement the text. The book could easily be used in a Utah history lesson or as a holiday read-aloud.

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A 4+ NF PB Reviewed by Denice Barainca

Both snowboarders and wanna-be boarders will like this book. The author has chosen the picture book format to tell everything there is to know about snowboarding. Brightly colored photographs and illustrations give a sense of excitement that encourages young people to try the sport. The book begins with an introduction to the world of snowboarding. It continues with detailed illustrations about equipment, clothing, and boarding techniques. The book shows advanced freeriding and extreme boarding, then ends with a section on safety. A special foldout section covers snowboard competition. “Snowboard Speak” is a glossary of snowboarding terms.

A reader can open this book without knowing anything about snowboarding and close it with a comfortable knowledge of the sport. It’s highly recommendable for any public or school library, but especially for libraries in areas where people participate in this popular winter pastime.

*****


* Pre+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

This book is a sequel to McPhail’s *Santa’s Book of Names*. In *Santa’s Book of Names*, Edward is a non-reader who is being pushed by a teacher to practice his reading. Edward’s parents are smart enough to know that Edward isn’t dumb and will start to read as soon as he is ready. On Christmas Night, Santa visits Edward’s house and needs help reading the names of the children and their presents. Over the course of that night’s ride with Santa, Edward becomes a good reader.

In this sequel, Edward is an avid reader who checks out and lives every book he reads. One old, musty book he checks out also brings home pirates. They want the book because it contains a map that directs them to their treasure. Edward refuses to give the book up because he doesn’t want library fines. In the end, Edward realizes the pirates can’t read, so he goes with them to dig up the treasure.

This book will work well as a read-aloud in storytimes and as a motivating factor in efforts to teach kids how important reading is.

B 6+ FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

Miklowitz has tackled a number of challenging topics in her books for young adults. In Camouflage, she describes a young boy’s introduction to the recently reported militia movement. Unfortunately, she does not pull this off as effectively as she has done with other themes.

The story relates fourteen-year-old Kyle’s visit to his estranged father in Michigan. Kyle makes the trip an act of defiance in an effort to assert his independence. All things seem rosy upon arrival, but he soon detects undertones that result in his discovery that his father is the leader of a local militia. Things progress to the point that Kyle is held captive while the militia members plant a bomb in a federal building, of all places! Kyle’s friendship with the daughter of the local Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms director brings a real moral dilemma into play.

The story proceeds a little too predictably, and the characters are stereotypical, as are their slogans. Miklowitz could have dug a bit deeper into the militia mentality and presented a better picture of the developing relationship between Kyle and his father. As it stands, the story feels too much like a piece of fiction quickly borrowed from a very real front-page disaster.


B 4+ FI Reviewed by Wendy Bishop

The Holly Sisters on Their Own could be used effectively to stimulate discussion about sibling rivalry. The book explores how two stepsisters, who seem to be opposites, come to find their similarities.

This book is refreshing for its portrayal of healthy but realistic relationships. Having the same biological father is the only bond the two sisters have at first, and they must learn to create a bond between themselves. Charmaine struggles with jealousy, because her own mother seems to favor Cissa. With Cissa, the reader experiences uncertainty and loneliness when her mother pursues a career outside the home.

Expecting to have the worst summer ever, Charmaine and Cissa come to find it’s been the best summer they’ve ever had. The two girls work together to convince their parents that they must live together.

This adventurous story is one readers can relate to no matter what their family situation. Charmaine and Cissa Holly are based on the author and her sister, Stephanie Greene. Mulford often bases her stories on the things and people closest to her.


* K-4 NF Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

This fourth book in the Canadian Starting with Science series has safe, simple experiments for young children to try at home and at school. The book encourages budding scientists to explore how plants grow and why they need water, sunlight, and soil.

The easy-to-follow directions allow children to discover things like how to make dirt, why weeds can grow through the crack in a sidewalk, and how acid rain affects plants. There are thirteen hands-on activities. The illustrator has photographed delightful children involved in various stages of an experiment. A list of easily attainable materials and instructions for the task at hand is quite helpful. An explanation for what is happening, as well as the importance of each experiment, is also included.

So go ahead and find out . . . what would happen if you planted a seed upside down? Or try planting a sock. Better yet, feed a healthy plant.
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your leftovers and see what happens! This book is full of great activities.

★★★★


A 3-6 FI PB Reviewed by Cinda Clement

This collection of fifth-to fifteenth-century European myths or tales includes bits from *Beowulf*, *The Wizard in the Stone*, *Finn MacCoul*, *Island of the Lost Children*, *Robin Hood*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Song of Roland*, *The Werewolf*, and *Chanticleer and the Fox*. Each story begins with a little quotation in the old language from which it comes, along with a modern translation below. Each story also has a beautiful full-page illustration. The stories, five to nine pages long, are like Bible stories for children. They make the children familiar with the stories, so when they are older and are introduced to the more difficult versions, they will not balk.

Many children reading this book will become culturally literate about his or her own literary heritage—many people have European ancestry, but are much more familiar with the Greek myths. This book will be a good addition to a family collection, a school library, or the sixth-grade classroom where the children study ancient world history.

★★★★


A 1-3 PB Reviewed by Suzanne Hess

With *The Giant Carrot*, Peck creates a playful adaptation of the Russian folktale "The Turnip." A carrot seed is planted, watered, and weeded, but most important, sung and danced to. As Papa Joe, Mama Bess, Brother Abel and Little Isabelle work together with one common goal throughout the summer, they are finally able to enjoy the rewards of their labor with a giant carrot—and carrot juice, carrot stew, carrot relish, and carrot puddin’.

The artwork is done with watercolors in vibrant colors, infusing even a common carrot with merriment and warmth. A recipe for carrot pudding is even included, enticing readers to continue the carrot craze long after they finish reading this delightful tale.

★★★★


* 4+ NF Reviewed by Kathe C. Homer

*A Child’s Delight* is truly that! The author has picked thirty of his favorite children’s books and revels in discussing them with us, the readers. His style is conversational as he reminisces about how he got into each of the books and what it is about each that delights and draws him in. The whole story of any book is not told, for that would not entice us to read it. Just enough is given to make us want to rush out, get the book, and read it immediately. Perrin talks about the authors, the times, the great characters, etc., and in discussing one title he will often bring up many others of the same genre that also enticed him as a youth. Wonderful reading for those of us who love children’s books!

★★★★


B 4+ FI Reviewed by Wendy Bishop

“Devil’s Den is a strong, scary name for the place they fought,” thought Joey as he and his parents placed flowers on the grave of Joshua Gibb. The family, participating in the Hillside Civil War Graves Project, promised to weed and decorate the grave every year. *Devil’s Den* is an
important contribution to the history of soldiers from Orange County who fought in Gettysburg during the Civil War.

Although this book celebrates past events, an important current event that Joey must face is adoption. It is apparent in the first few chapters that Joey likes his stepfather, but when Ben asks if he can adopt Joey, friendship turns to anger. "Being a stepfather was kind of like being long-term company. I bet if he ever got to adopt me, he'd turn into a really rotten father."

The unusual twist about this book is that Joey actually finds out where his birth father lives and talks to him on the phone. His father turns out not to be like Joey imagined him.

This story will have special appeal to young history buffs and those who wonder about adoption. The mixture of the past with the present makes this book enjoyable to read.


This delightful picture book follows a family while they look at each of the animals at the farm fair. The children have a great time imitating the ducks and goats, climbing on fences to watch the cows and horses, and eating honey fresh from the hive. Seeing the farm animals up close brings lots of questions. Why do cows moo? Why do ducks waddle? Why do horses swish their tails? Why do pigs roll in the mud? The children learn the answers to these questions and many more. Cows moo to talk to each other. Ducks waddle because their webbed feet are perfect for swimming but not good for walking. Horses swish their tails to brush away flies. Pigs roll in the mud to stay cool and protect themselves from sunburn. By the end of the day, little brother is worn out from learning about all those animals.

This book, one of the *Question and Answer Storybook* Series, is excellent for reading out loud. Each page shows the family looking at one farm animal. It asks the questions children would ask about that animal, then answers the question on their level. Brightly colored illustrations capture a day of fun and learning.

A 1-5 NF Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Once again Ross has produced a book of clever, creative, doable crafts for young people. Step-by-step instructions for thirty ornaments, from Dog Biscuit Doggie to Hands and Foot Angel, made from household items are accompanied by simple illustrations. This title will delight not only kids but also elementary school teachers, Cub Scout and Brownie Scout Leaders, and parents looking for something new to share with their young charges. Older children can easily produce most ornaments without adult supervision. Teachers may wish to buy a copy for their classrooms and school and public librarians will want to add it to the collection.


A 6-9 PB NF Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, the story of a spirited yet plain orphan girl who matures into a gritty governess and falls in love with the darkly handsome Mr. Rochester, has captivated audiences for more than 150 years. As we follow the story of Jane Eyre, we are allowed a glimpse into the remarkable life of her creator. Charlotte Brontë was raised in an English parsonage. She lost her mother at the tender age of five, necessitating the Brontë girls being sent to the Dickensian Cowan Bridge Clergy Daughters' boarding school for their education. Cowan Bridge, where Charlotte lost two of her beloved older sisters to tuberculosis, became the model for the terrible Lowood School described in Jane Eyre.

Charlotte, like her heroine Jane, was not a handsome girl, yet she made up for her "physical inferiority" with her lively personality and intelligence. She was a writer at heart, bossy and snobbish, loathing housework and sewing. She failed at teaching and found the life of a governess boring and humiliating. Jane Eyre, Brontë's second novel, literally wrote itself. Charlotte looked to her own life's experiences, people she had met and the landscapes she loved as the basis for this most extraordinary book. The romantic passion between Jane and Rochester, such an intricate part of the story, was fueled by Charlotte's own longing for a love of her own, as well as the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lord Byron, whose works Charlotte devoured.

Ross has painted an accurate picture of the less-than-Victorian, highly complex Charlotte Brontë, allowing the reader to experience the process of life becoming literature. Additionally, Ross has enthusiastically provided an enticing introduction to a truly great piece of fiction.

A 8+ FI Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

From the back of the Grand View Restaurant in New York where Hannah lives, the reader gains insight into life during the Great Depression. Hannah’s hobby is to write letters and stories. The book is made up of the letters Hannah writes and the responses. Her pen pals include her grandma, aunt, best friend (who never writes back, much to Hannah’s anger), pen pal Edward (whom Hannah learns to understand and enjoy), the secretary to the president, the first lady, and even President Roosevelt himself.

The format of the book provides an interesting study for children in letter writing. The author does a good job of developing Hannah’s character through her letters and lists sources in the back of the book as well as describes which parts of the story are real and which are made up. The book is light and entertaining while providing interesting insights into life during the Depression.


A 4+ FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

With a title like *Sasquatch,* many readers will pick up this book. The good news is that most of them will keep reading. Smith’s background as a research biologist comes to good use, as he spends a fair amount of time discussing physical characteristics of mammals and geological events that factor into this story. He is also able to keep the reader involved with a swift-moving story. Further, he persuades the reader to suspend incredulity to the point he or she is rooting for this animal’s continued existence.

Smith gathers a good cast of characters for this Sasquatch hunt. Dylan is the thirteen-year-old voice. His father is a sometimes real estate agent and dabbler in all kinds of fringe interests, crypto-zoology being one of them. With Dylan’s mom off in Egypt working on a Ph.D., Dylan’s father takes him to a B.F.I. meeting (if you don’t get that, its Bigfoot International), where he meets a number of bearded backwoods characters who claim some kind of encounter with the Sasquatch. Among them are three mute brothers who are rumored to have been abducted by aliens. The foil here is Dr. Theodore Flagg, a Captain Ahab for Bigfoots, who has spent his life searching for them and is determined to bring one in dead or alive. As it turns out, he would prefer dead.

Everyone is sworn to secrecy as they head off to Mt. Saint Helens to bag a Bigfoot. Dylan and his father go along to try to prevent this from happening. Well, the suspense builds, as does the volcanic activity of the mountain. Secret subterranean tunnels are revealed, and Dylan even meets the infamous D. B. Cooper! Believe it or not, it all comes together well, and Sasquatch is, shall we say, available for a sequel.


A 2-6 NF Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

After reading this book, you too will want a “ticket to France.” Without ever leaving home, readers will learn about France’s culture, landscape, and people. What makes this book especially appealing is the sense of humor displayed. It doesn’t just state facts as some travel books do, but it makes the facts interesting. When discussing transportation, the book mentions a train with the word “Whoosh!” Another picture caption reads, “Honk! Honk! Traffic jams are part of life in Paris.”

A large, colorful map illustrates how big France is. It compares its size to other European countries. The rest of the pictures are photographs taken from all aspects of French life. The author has used simple yet rich language to explain various aspects of this intriguing country. This interesting book is fast-reading and interesting on

* 4-7 PB Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Prayer is a universal language, connecting us to an unseen power that lifts, comforts, and nourishes the soul. Tender words of praise and supplication, accompanied by photographs mostly of children, reach across a diverse religious and cultural chasm, embracing the reader with warmth and understanding. Prayers of request, thanksgiving, blessing, joy and celebration, simply uttered, enrich our lives and remind us “in whose lap the whole universe plays” (Guru Nanak, Sikh). Strickland has included notes at the end of the book that should be used to help young readers understand the included prayers and a little bit of the culture of which they are a part. The warmth of this book is captured in one of its prayers:

So long as we enjoy the light of day
May we greet one another with love.
So long as we enjoy the light of day
May we pray for one another. (Zuni)

Originally compiled for children, this book is a joyful experience for all readers.


A Pre+ PB Reviewed by Sarah Fisher

Deep in the woods at the riverbed, on the pond, over the meadows, in a burrow, and in other areas of the forest, baby animals of various kinds ask the same question, “Do you love me, Mama?” Each of the mother’s answers have a similar message: “I love you forever, and ever, and always.” In the end, a child in her log home near the woodlands asks the same question. Her mother hugs her and softly replies, “I love you as the stars love you, constant and bright above you... forever, and ever, and always.”

The illustrations, done in watercolors and colored pencils, are captivating. They are large and bring a feeling of love and comfort. Children will be enchanted by the realistic pictures of soft, furry animals. This is a perfect book for mother and child to snuggle up with and read just before bedtime! The child will fall asleep feeling warm, cozy, and loved.


B Pre-3 PB Reviewed by Cinda Clement

A young African-American girl talks about her hair and the different ways she can wear it. This doesn’t sound too interesting, does it? With language of simile, such as planting rows of braids like seeds in a garden, hair thick as a forest, or curly as vines curling upward, and illustrations that fill the pages with fanciful pictures of hair, gardens, vines, the world, and a smiling girl, the book is interesting.

The book is simple but beautiful. The story will be enlightening to children who have never considered the textures and possibilities of hair different from their own. This story will help African-American children accept a part of themselves in this white-oriented culture. I can’t imagine the same book written about white children’s hair. That in itself is something to consider.

Reviewed by Rachael W. Galvez

“Somewhere today . . . someone is being a friend instead of fighting.” The book opens with this statement accompanied by photographs of a Caucasian and an African-American boy in a variety of fun-loving poses. Each page spread portrays another positive activity, such as visiting an elderly friend or planting a tree. The book is refreshing, because it reminds us that there are people everywhere who are doing good things that can make a difference, though they seem small. It encourages readers to do similar things that contribute to family, community, and world peace. A good choice for home, school, or library.


Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

“I remember that as a young boy I used to look in the mirror and I would curse my color, my blackness. But in those days they didn’t call you ‘black.’ They didn’t say ‘minority.’ They called us ‘colored’ or ‘nigger.’” Born in 1936, the son of a North Carolina sharecropper, Leon Tillage matter-of-factly tells a powerful story of growing up black in the South. He describes life as a sharecropper’s son, detailing his home life and schooling and how vastly it differed from a white boy’s life.

“The white people would teach their kids that black people had no feelings. They didn’t have no soul, it didn’t matter what you did to them, you couldn’t hurt their feelings because they didn’t have feelings.” So the bus driver let the white children off the bus to chase and throw rocks at the black children walking home from school. Blacks and whites drank from separate water fountains and used separate restrooms. Blacks sat at the back of the bus and in the balcony at the movie house and lived in nightly fear of visits from clansmen. They were set upon by dogs just for sport and run down by cars because “boys will be boys.” On his fifteenth birthday, Leon saw his father murdered by a car load of drunk teenagers who were out to “have some fun.”

As a teenager, Tillage joined Martin Luther King, Jr. and marched for his civil-rights, facing the anger of the whites as well as the local blacks, because the demonstrations cost them their jobs. They were mauled by police dogs, beaten with sticks, blasted with water hoses, and jailed for marching. Then “the most rejoicing day of my life” came, when Tillage saw “the white man would go to jail for abusing us.”

Told in his own voice, this moving story of a gentleman who faces life with no bitterness because “what good would that do? I know there were bad times, . . . but you know, there were rejoicing times, too.” Leon Tillage attributes his prevailing optimism to his boyhood, when he was raised by strict religious parents who loved and supported him. He has spent a lifetime demonstrating the courage to endure hatred and prejudice and still continues on in his peaceful protest to educate us in the importance of freedom. A wonderful story that should be shared by readers of all ages. Certainly a tribute to the resiliency of the human spirit!


Reviewed by Cinda Clement

Tina wants a cat, but her parents say no. Then one day in school, a mischievous little ghost adopts her. When she takes him home and he continues his misbehaving, Tina’s father reads that a cat in the house will get rid of a ghost, so the family goes out to find a cat.

This silly story is a little hard to swallow.

Reviewed by Cinda Clement

Fourteen-year-old John and his family move to Hawaii, where his father has accepted a job. He must adjust to many changes and very different customs than his former life as an Oklahoma farm boy. He becomes friends with Calola, a Hawaiian girl, and feels the first stirrings of love.

The story takes place in the 1920s, so we get a little flavor of Hawaii's past. It also deals with racism, romantic relationships, and integrity. This story is probably average or a cut above in the teen romance category. It is entirely innocent, yet deals with romantic attraction in a thoughtful manner.

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Reviewed by Sarah Fisher

The bunny, Max, is back, and this time his sister, Ruby, is trying to teach him to say any words beside his one word BANG! "Say 'cup,' Max," Ruby will say. "Bang!" says Max! "Say 'pot,' or 'fish' or 'egg,'" says Ruby. All Max ever says is "BANG!" Finally, Max surprises everyone. Instead of saying "yum" about an apple as Ruby asks him to, he takes a bite and... "DELICIOUS!"

For those of us who like Max, here is another fun and surprising book. Your preschooler will enjoy the simple, large illustrations on durable board pages. The number of words is also ideal for younger children. Easy for tots to relate with, Max books are perennial to be favorites, and *Max's First Word* is no exception!

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Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Alice Snavely lives in a box in a cupboard under the stairs. She's always dusty and needs some help unfolding when it's time to come out to play. Alice is a witch with "snaky thin fingers." She makes a powerful brew of bats' teeth, spit and bee stings, mixed with marshmallows, purple ink and birthday candles still full of wishes. With three drops of brew, Alice works her magic on her broom and the shadows on the lawn, turning them into long-necked geese, knights on galloping horses, and one very troublesome wizard with a flowing magical beard. Whitcher carries the reader on a wild ride through the moonlit night, with Alice ending up damp and dusty, as she's folded up into her box again. Too bad, she'll be quite wrinkled the next time she wants to come out to play!

Each page explodes with witchy antics as Glass masterfully brings Alice's magic to life with his bold illustrations, painted in rich, vibrant colors. A mischievously good read!

Reviewed by Wendy Bishop

Oftentimes we can do better if we are scared to death of what will happen if we don’t. This is certainly the case with Matt. He has a habit of lying to impress others, and he’s been losing his temper a lot lately. People won’t believe him, especially when he tries to convince them he has seen a ghost. It all starts when the class bully challenges him to stay after hours in the haunted school. Because Matt is new, he can’t let his classmates believe he is a coward. The adventure begins when Matt hears funny noises in room eleven and goes to investigate.

Matt is not the first person Miss Whipple has visited. She has haunted many in the past, including the school principal. But what does she want with Matt? He has never done anything to her. Well, the reason why is revealed when Matt keeps getting poor grades on his spelling test. “It’s people like you who won’t let me rest in peace, says the ghost. People who won’t try.” Matt soon finds out that the only way he can get rid of this pesky ghost is to get all his spelling words right, not lose his temper, and always tell the truth.

This book is an excellent motivator for those of us who fall short of our potential. Matt learns that if he studies hard he can be a very good speller. He also learns he doesn’t have to lie to get people to like him. Teachers will love this book, because it helps children see that failure is a much more frightening experience than working a little harder to get good grades. Miss Whipple will make sure of that.


Reviewed by Cinda Clement

This wonderful piece of historical fiction takes place in the United States during the 1700s. The place is New York, along the Hudson River. A black woman and her daughter, Monday, are coming to America from Madagascar to free an uncle who has been unlawfully sold as a slave. Mother had lived in America before as a free woman and a midwife. On board the ship, mother and daughter deliver the baby of one of the women below, who is being transported to America to be sold as a slave. This is her first encounter with slavery, and Monday does not understand it. Mother explains slavery in America and tells the history of her own mother, a slave who walked away one night and escaped. Because of this, Monday’s mother and the brother she was going to rescue were born free. The two arrive in America and meet their relatives, who are free men living in the New York area. They also meet some of the black slaves who are friends of the free men. Monday and the reader soon feel the fear, anger, frustration, and inhumanity of slavery. As Monday gets to know her relatives, she becomes more curious about her own roots. Her mother, meanwhile, is out trying to arrange for Uncle Frederick’s release from bondage. An interesting twist to the story occurs before part of the family finally sail safely out of the harbor again toward Madagascar and home.

This story is intense and captivating. The reader is involved from the opening page until the last page when Monday and her family are safely aboard the boat, moving away from the United States. This is a fast-paced, historically educational and personal story about slavery and the black people’s plight in the northern United States during the 1700s. It is well-written, with some subtlety and interesting twists in plot. It could be used as a springboard for a discussion of slavery or oppression. The author begins each chapter with actual copies of ledgers listing goods sold (including black people), reports of runaway slaves, or court orders regarding slaves—all of which add to the reality of this look at a dark period of our history. This book would be a valuable addition to a library collection.
Yolen does a beautiful job bringing together two very different worlds: the human world and the fairy world. On All Hallow’s Eve a young human girl meets a fairy boy, and together they explore their two homes. Although each wishes the other to remain with them, neither can bear to part with the world they love. They learn that even though they shall be apart they can remain “friends fast, from first to last.”

Yolen and Dyer combine poetry and painting to create a magnificent fairy tale. The rhythm of the poetry flows naturally and shows how people can be friends even though they are different. It shows that those of different cultures and experiences need not be feared. The pictures are brilliant and bright, and exhibit the emotions found in the story: the excitement of discovery, the joy of sharing, and the sorrow of leaving a new friend.

★★★★★