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Book Reviews

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Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

Rizka, a young motherless gypsy girl, awaits the return of her wandering father. Rizka and her cat, Petzel, fend for themselves in Greater Dunitsa, a small town where one of Rizka’s best friends, Big Franko, is the blacksmith and where the Chief Councilor, Sharpnack, is determined to be rid of the clever, street-wise gypsy. As he becomes more cruel, Sharpnack also becomes more ridiculous—qualities Rizka cleverly exposes while endearing herself to the townspeople, one person at a time. Rizka uses gypsy know-how to heal the sick. She brings the feuding cheese-maker and rag collector together so that their love-sick children won’t have to elope. When the dreaded Zipple descends upon the town, the mistral wind makes the people bicker and quarrel. Sharpnack will have none of that. He orders quarrelers to jail, but finds himself there as well. Because of so much name-calling, all government officials are in jail, and Rizka is appointed the town’s chief officer—a role she passes on as quickly as possible. When the gypsies come to town, Rizka expects her father to be among them. Heart-broken to learn of his death, Rizka seeks privacy in her wagon and is reduced to tears. But life goes on, and so does Rizka. After a brief period of mourning, the orphan gypsy girl decides not to wander off with her own people, but to stay in Greater Dunitsa and live with adopted people.

Alexander has created a town of characters whose actions span the rainbow. No one person is all good or all bad. Even wise, Rizka has a moment of emotional breakdown. But the greatest lesson to be drawn here is that differences are all right as long as they aren’t maliciously vented. Because “what goes around comes around.”


Reviewed by Rachel Welton

One can hardly hear of the settlement of the American West without thinking of Laura Ingalls, her ma and pa, and her sisters, Mary, Carrie, and Grace. Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* books have delighted readers young and old for more than fifty years. Wilder’s autobiographical novels of growing up in a pioneer family have kept the American spirit of adventure and exploration alive and well in the hearts of countless people.

This remarkable, detailed biography of one of America’s most beloved authors is a veritable treasure trove for anyone who has ever read Wilder’s books or dreamt of living the pioneer life of the nineteenth century. From the time of Laura’s parents to the time of her own death in 1957, Anderson did a superb job of chronicling the life of an American legend whose works will likely be known and loved for generations to come.

Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

On July 14, 1986, Dr. Robert Ballard crouched on his knees inside the tiny submarine Alvin, his eyes glued to the viewport through which the greatest shipwreck of all time would soon materialize. After more than seventy years, the Titanic came into full view. “Her famous bow, now weeping great tears of rust,” is the first image Ballard sees of the largest luxury liner the world had ever seen. The wreckage rested on the ocean floor in two pieces, amid an extensive debris field, littered with hundreds of objects that spilled out when the ship broke in two. The tragedy of the Titanic is hauntingly memorialized by the shoes, boots, and other personal items strewn about her watery grave. Ballard takes the reader on a guided tour of the discovery of the Titanic, as well as four other twentieth-century shipwrecks—the Empress of Ireland, the Lusitania, the Britannic, and the Andrea Doria—detailing the disasters that sent these great ships to their final resting place at the bottom of the sea. Underwater photographs, coupled with Marschall’s magnificent paintings, reveal the final chapter in each liner’s story. Archival and contemporary photographs, Marschall’s paintings of the ships at sea, period posters, and modern-day sketches detail life aboard these great transatlantic ocean liners. Each disaster is personalized through a sidebar that highlights the story of one of the ship’s passengers. The book also includes a glossary of ship terminology and a recommended reading list.

As time passes, our fascination with these major ship wrecks continues to grow. Each ship chronicled in this book was believed to be unsinkable, yet they all sank, primarily due to human error or too much faith in technology. These ghost liners can serve to remind us that we should trust people, not machines. According to Ballard, “those who trust too much in their own creations will sooner or later run into an iceberg.” A fascinating book with great appeal to readers of all ages.


Reviewed by Lillian Heil

Like the recent movie about Gettysburg, Abraham’s Battle focuses more on the people than the battle itself. Abraham, a slave who has escaped to freedom, meets a sixteen-year-old rebel named Lamar Cooper who has been sent to search for herbs to treat the wounded. Lamar is a “poor white” orphan who has had no experience with slavery. Lamar joined the rebel army to have a little fun, but learned very quickly that war is ugly. He learns from Abraham some of the evils of slavery. Abraham decides to volunteer his mule for ambulance service, and after the crucial battle of July 2, Abraham finds the badly wounded Lamar on the battlefield and takes him to the Union side’s hospital, fearing that the Confederate side might press him back into slavery. He learns of Lamar’s death when he receives a letter from the boy’s sister. Lamar had written to tell her of his injuries and to ask her to send some okra seeds to Abraham. The seeds are enclosed in the letter.

Abraham wishes to hear President Lincoln deliver the famous Gettysburg address, and of this freed slave’s desire to hear him speak. As he presses closer, one of the fancy union soldiers scornfully remarks: “Looks to me like the bottom rail doesn’t know it belongs on the bottom.” Abraham gets the last word, though. President Lincoln asks him to take him to the battlefield in his cart; he gives old Abraham his top hat and then rides with Abraham back to the house, where
a carriage awaits to take him in style to the train station. Abraham passes the soldiers who had made fun of him with a cheerful “Looks like the bottom rail’s on the top now.”

Banks’ gentle tale moves along at a steady pace as she reveals the personalities of Abraham, Lamar, and President Lincoln. The reader can feel the strength and private suffering of these three men and realize the high cost of the battle of Gettysburg, in which so many good men on both sides gave their lives.


* 7+ FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

Aunt Josephine is in the “backwater,” a Breedlove family expression for living out of sorts, out of favor, or out of touch. To the Breedlove family of lawyers, Josephine is, tragically, not one of them. She has adopted a hermit’s life, alone atop an Adirondack peak, where she communes with the birds and creates beautiful wood carvings. Sixteen-year-old Ivy Breedlove feels a connection to Aunt Jo and wants to write her story as part of the family history she is compiling. Ivy also feels the “eccentric” stigma on her shoulders as she resists the family tradition of studying the law in favor of her passion for history.

Bauer certainly comes up with some unique story. Rules of the Road helps us ponder relationships and courage in the context of selling shoes. Backwater does much the same as Ivy trudges through a wintry wilderness with a guide named Mountain Mama to find her Aunt Jo and her family history. In doing so she gains understanding of her place in Breedlove lore. The message here is that we are all different and should be appreciated for our own unique qualities. Ivy also learns, through a riveting mountain survival sequence, that we are all capable of more than we think possible. Of course, stated here it seems banal, but in a Bauer novel, it comes to life. This is one great writer who can have you laughing one minute and drying your eyes the next.


A 5-8 FI Reviewed by Keith R. Westover

After establishing himself as a successful radio humorist on his nationally syndicated End of the Road radio program, becoming nationally known as the Motel 6 spokesman, and writing several entertaining books of wisdom (Small Comforts, As Far as You Can Go, Without a Passport, and others), Tom Bodett has entered the field of juvenile fiction and appears poised to repeat past successes.

Williwaw! is a story about a sister and brother, September, 13, and Ivan, 12, who live in the Alaskan wilderness with their widowed fisherman father. Covering about a week in the lives of these two youngsters, the story chronicles their everyday activities while their father is away fishing, and relates the consequences of some poor choices made without adult supervision. Many realistic descriptions reveal the Alaskan locale, especially a particularly gripping narrative of the dangers of the cold Alaskan waters.

The exact location of the adventure is uncertain, since most of the place names are fictitious. Nevertheless, the primary characters in the book are well developed and believable, and the story flows smoothly and inexorably toward its climax. This book is highly recommended.
A grandmother reminisces about the time when, as a little girl, she saw a prickly caterpillar in her grandfather's garden and saved it from a blue jay. Her grandfather explained to her how she could put the caterpillar in a jar, feed it thistle leaves, and watch its transformation to a Painted Lady Butterfly. Thinking the little caterpillar would be afraid to be away from its natural home, the little girl decided to decorate the box that will house the sleeping chrysalis and newly hatched butterfly.

"I want it pretty till she goes," I said. And so Grandpa and I drew flowers on colored paper. Cone flowers, purple-blue, and marigolds, latana, bright as flame, and thistles, too.

Soon the changes from caterpillar, to chrysalis, to butterfly occur and the little girl must let the beautiful butterfly go. Now a grandmother, she sees hundreds of Painted Lady Butterflies come yearly to her beautiful garden, as if to say thank you for her kindness many years before.

This book carries a beautiful message about the love of nature and the loving relationship between a youngster and her grandfather. We can pass on to the next generation a love of nature that will pay off for years to come. The descriptive phrases of each sentence are arranged on separate lines and give a poetic, though only partially rhyming, effect. Shed's beautiful full-page color illustrations are expressive and match each part of the story. I have hatched a Monarch butterfly from a chrysalis and used a bottle just as in the story, but the little girl's idea to decorate the box like a beautiful garden is unique. Use this selection as a peaceful read-aloud picture book, as a resource for studying the metamorphosis of insects in elementary school nature units, or before making a butterfly house with your family. The last page explains five steps on "How to Raise a Butterfly."


The National Audubon Society has compiled an easy-to-read guide for identifying the fifty most commonly found trees in North America, along with over one hundred additional related species. With more than 450 color photographs and illustrations, this guide provides a detailed physical description of each tree, its shape and height, habitat, where it can be found, and its species name. The book is divided into four parts. Part one discusses the world of trees: the types of trees, how they grow, and their effect on humans and the environment. Part two provides information on identifying trees by their leaves, flowers, fruit, and bark. Part three is a field guide that describes each tree, and part four is a reference section which includes a glossary that lists the 50 state trees, complete with photographs, as well as terms used by botanists and naturalists. The resource section also list books for further reading, videos, organization devoted to trees, and web sites. This is a valuable reference book for both school and public libraries, as well as for the home reference library.
This book has an old copyright date, but quickly went out of print and has been recently reissued in paperback format. This marvelous tale deserves to be mentioned again. If you have it in your library, look for it. If not, rush right out and buy it!

Buran is an unusual woman for her time—for any time! Buran lives in old Arabia near the time of Sharazad. She is not content with life as other women are. She wants more than to be married and become the overseer of a home. Her father, very poor, faces much ridicule as the father of seven daughters. Her uncle, very rich, is the proud father of seven sons that he is seeing off into the world to make their fortune.

Buran ask her father the unthinkable—to let her take all of his savings and leave dressed as a man. At first her request is refused, but as the family grows poorer, her father grants her wish. She leaves in the middle of the night to travel with a camel caravan to the sea.

For many years no one suspects that Baran is a woman. She befriends rough, savvy camel caravan owners; rich merchants, and even a prince. Slowly she falls in love with the prince, and he begins to suspect who and what she is. Both realize that they never can marry, and Buran runs away again—this time towards home. In her travels there she meets her seven cousins. They have all lost their fortunes and are working menial jobs. She gives each enough money to get home, extracting the promise that they will tattoo her initial on their chests.

Can you guess the ending? This is a powerful book that girls will love.

C Adult NF Reviewed by Nancy Alder

Simple, low-budget ideas for games, displays, and activities that encourage reading are always in demand by school and public librarians. Although nothing is startlingly new or thrilling in this book, the ideas are varied, easy, and cheap to execute.

The inexpensive, colorful, and glossy materials readily available through library catalogs make these homespun offerings fairly uninviting. Much of the book is ridiculously basic. Is it really necessary to offer a template of a plain, rectangular bookmark with instructions to design a bookmark that celebrates an award-winning book using a number-two pencil. Are any librarians out there smacking their foreheads and saying, “Eureka! Why didn’t I think of that!” Sit quietly for six or seven minutes and you’ll come up with a half dozen of the ideas in this book. Use the $16.95 to buy a different book for your library.


A 2+ PB Reviewed by Rachel Welton

Playful, rhyming text and beautiful, vibrantly colored illustrations make *The House Book* a gem that will delight readers both young and old. DuQuette takes the reader on a tour of a charming house, devoting separate illustrations to the floors, walls, doors, windows, stairs, and interior. Detailed depictions of a street, neighborhood, and city bring the story back to the original house, where DuQuette concludes: “You’ve seen the things that houses do, but they’re not homes without you.”


A 3-6 NF Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

A warm-weather drive north of Deer Creek Reservoir toward Heber, Utah, will almost surely reward the faithful birder with a view of sandhill cranes strutting around in the wetlands. This spring, a pair of whooping cranes was also sighted. DuTemple’s book will introduce both the birder and the casual resident to the characteristics, diet, life cycle, and migration patterns of these two species of North American cranes. It explains, for example, that a newly hatched crane chick grows to be almost three feet tall in only eight weeks!

This *Carolrhoda Nature Watch Book* will hold the interest of elementary schoolers during their first research. The text is clearly written, and every page is filled with interesting facts and color photographs. A map of migration routes, a glossary, and an index are also included. DuTemple describes the work of biologists with migrating and resident flocks of North American crane populations, especially those associated with the whooping cranes, which are an endangered species.

Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

"I coil like a rope. I slither and hiss. My little forked tongue flickers that way and this. Who am I?" This is just one of the 26 rhyming clues to an animal's identity that make up this life-the-flap alphabet book. Flaps are camouflaged in the colored illustrated scenes on each page.

This life-the-flap book likely will endure many readings by preschoolers and thus would make a durable addition to the children's section of a public, school, or home library. Hendra's illustrations use basic shapes, simple lines, and bright colors to catch the eyes of young children.


Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Ever wonder what would happen if the substitute teacher didn't show up for school and nobody reported it? Flying Solo is the absorbing story of one Friday in April when the kids rule Mr. Fabiano's sixth grade class. Mr. "Fab's" class is an eclectic mix of students who find themselves without the expected substitute teacher and vote to run the class themselves. Star pupil Karen Ballard becomes the champion of "KIDS RULE" and easily persuades her peers that they can take charge. Jessica Cooke, an outspoken lawyer's daughter, insists that it's illegal, wrong, and dangerous to rule themselves. But she is the only dissenting vote. With Mr. Fabiano's lesson plan written on the chalkboard, the class falls easily into their daily routine, convinced that "Mr. Fab" would approve of their decision to take control of the class. Vicki turns on the tape player, filling the room with a mellow jazz that signals the beginning of their daily writing ritual. Rachel, who hasn't spoken a word since Tommy Feathers died six months ago, writes of hearing the sound of her voice again as soon as she picks up her pen and puts her words on paper. Sean writes about the beautiful, quiet places in the woods that have become his sanctuary, protecting him from the anger of a drunken father and a live-in girl friend. Jasmine expresses her hidden desire to be a good wife and mother, while Bastian, the self-proclaimed "Air Force Brat" laments over the impending four-month quarantine his puppy Barkley is about to face when they leave for Hawaii the next day. Finally, Missy sums up the plight of the class as she refers to them as "orphans." "We have to help each other, since we don't have any teacher to watch over us. Or even a sub. We're on our own."

With their new motto, "Kids Rule," directing their actions, the day wears on through spelling, music, lunch, reading, and even recess, while no adult realizes that Mr. Fabiano's class has no teacher. Everything runs smoothly until the kids vote to conduct the Rock Ritual, a closure ceremony used by Mr. Fabiano to say goodbye to a classmate. The purpose is to share good memories about the student leaving. As they speak, they pass the rock around the circle, letting it soak up each story, each good memory. Around the circle they go, recounting Bastian's birthday party, his new puppy Barkley, throwing Mr. Fab into the pool, and blowing up a mailbox with a cherry bomb. Finally the rock is passed to Rachel, who communicates by writing notes which are read by her best friend, Missy. "I remember how you teased Tommy Feathers." Silence and then an explosion of angry accusations run rampant from person to person, as they all remember Tommy Feathers and how he went to bed one night and just died. "I told you it was dangerous to run a class without a teacher," Jessica says. But Karen immediately takes charge and insists that they write about Tommy. With his favorite music, the...
1812 Overture, playing softly in the background, the kids finally face their memories of Tommy Feathers and his death. On a day in April, Mr. Fabiano’s class “proved that kids could have fun and still act a lot more responsibly than most grownups ever thought we could.”

Flying Solo is about kids taking risks, being on their own, facing danger, and surviving in the face of it all. An easy, sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant read with a winning cast of imperfectly realistic characters, whose collective voice perceptively speaks to life as a sixth-grade kid.


Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

“A father and son walked through the world together. The father carried a large stone on his back. The stone was heavy. It made him tired. Everywhere he went he carried the stone. He never put it down.” Living hand to mouth, the boy and his father travel alone. The boy looks for people to help his father carry the heavy stone, but everyone is too busy tending their flocks, sowing their fields, or cleaning their house and tending their children. Sometimes while they rest, the father tells his son about all of the things he could have done had he not been burdened with his big stone. He could have been a sailor or a builder. And if it hadn’t been for the stone, he would have loved the boy’s mother more, and she would not have died of a broken heart. As the boy grows he offers to help his father carry the big stone, but is refused. “It’s still too heavy for you,” his father always says. Finally the day comes when the father cannot take another step, and the boy lifts the stone from father’s back and puts it on his own. For the first time in many years, the father can stand straight again. With the weight gone, he becomes light as a feather, floats into the sky and disappears among the clouds. Left alone to bear his father’s big burden, the boy looks at the steep hill in front of him, then lets the stone fall from his back. It crashes to the ground, breaking into hundreds of little pebbles. There, sparkling among the pebbles, the boy finds a diamond. He puts it in his pocket and walks up the hill. There he meets a farmer’s daughter, falls in love, marries, and lives happily every after, free at last of the big stone.

Award-winning illustrator Michael Garland has created a charming tale of how a boy finds his own happiness by learning from his father’s wasted life. Vivid, full-color illustrations tell the tale as warmly and simply as the written verse and will appeal to the younger reader. This would be a good read-aloud for story hour.

* 9-12 NF Reviewed by Rachel Welton

What is it like to grow up multiracial in the United States? In *What Are You? Voices of Mixed-Race Young People*, Gaskins gives dozens of young people the opportunity to share their own stories in their own words. From the pressures put on these young adults by their "pure"-race peers to pick one race with which to identify, to the joys of being able to grow up with more than one rich cultural heritage, these personal narratives, poems, and essays are enlightening and thought-provoking. The fresh voices of these young people shed new light on a subject that is often ignored or unnoticed.

Over eighty shorter essays and narratives are broken up by eight longer "snapshots" that tell an individual's story in greater depth and detail. Interspersed with the essays is commentary from the author and from professionals who work with multiracial children and adults. The commentary and analysis are insightful and thorough. Included at the end of the book is a comprehensive resources section that includes names of agencies, magazines, books, movies, and videos that provide suggestions to those who wish to learn more about this captivating and important subject.

★★★★


A 4-12 FI Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

*Journeys with Elijah* is a collection of eight legends from various countries and times about the prophet Elijah—legends from North Africa, Argentina, Iraq, Persia, the Caribbean island of Curacao, Babylon, China, and Eastern Europe. Goldin begins her book by telling the Biblical account of Elijah's life and explaining that Elijah, who is the symbol of hope and peace, was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire by a great whirlwind and may never have died. Those who celebrate the Passover meal set a place for him at the table. In most of the eight legends, Elijah appears as an old man who is a stranger to the other characters in the story. The last legend ends with this resolve by the rabbi: “But now I greet each person I meet with a full heart no matter how he or she looks or who he or she is. In this way, I hope to be worthy of meeting the great prophet once again, and this time of not turning him away.”

I liked the overall message of the book: treat everyone with respect and love, and your life will be happy now and in the future. Notable quotes include “Know that . . . things are not always as they seem. Trust God and keep your faith” (p. 10);
and “What they thought was a curse had really been a blessing” (p. 26). Goldin includes a substantial list of books for further reading about the life of Elijah, the stories themselves, and the locations of the stories. Pinkney, a famous illustrator of children’s books, successfully met the challenge of depicting each legend accurately in its cultural setting and time period. The legends could be used as a basis of a play for young people in multi-cultural studies. There is plenty of dialogue in each story, so the stories could easily be adapted to a reader’s theater as well.


B 3-6 FI Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Lizard, known as Elizabeth only to her mother, apparently, is an all-American girl. She loves baseball, football, bike hurling, and boys. She hates girl stuff like dresses, shopping, and standing up in front of people. But when there’s a chance to go to Chicago and see a professional ballgame with everything, including all of her friends, for only $25, Lizard needs a way to make some quick cash.

Lizard is hijacked into a teen modeling contest. Much to everyone’s surprise, including her own, she wins. Her victory comes in spite of a broken arm, a bad case of hiccups (with a really novel cure), and lots of bad feelings. She is against the idea from the start, but a substantial cash prize is offered, and Lizard really needs the money.

Lizard’s dilemmas aren’t exactly earth-shaking, but then neither is the book. Good-humored camaraderie with a few major crises (like having her bra size shouted out in a shop where the pretty girls are) make this story palatable, if not memorable.


A 5+ NF Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

From the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, Gourley traces the hardships and advances for girls and women in the American workforce through their letters, diaries, autobiographies, research studies, and historical photographs. Engaging accounts and gripping narrative keep the reader turning the pages and learning much about the courage and determination of young working-class women such as Agnes Nestor, Leonora O’Reilly, Clara Lemlich, and Pauline Newman.

The format of Good Girl Work is similar to Murphy’s The Boys War and Rappaport’s American Women: Their Lives in Their Words. Like Rappaport, Gourley recounts the lives of everyday women and points out the heroic and extraordinary. An excellent book to add to the study of industrialization in America and to the shelves of middle and high school libraries.


A 5-9 FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Sixth-grader Carley Cameron is assigned to find out about the most obnoxious boy in the class. Dustin Groat comes from a family of trouble makers, and even though Dustin doesn’t cause much trouble himself, everyone is afraid of him—mostly because of his family. Dustin’s mother is dead and he usually retreats into a world of his own. At school he doesn’t do the work and
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hides out in the school gym during recess and lunch breaks. Slowly Carley comes to see Dustin as a person that needs help to escape his family and learn to read.

The book shows young readers that prejudices are not always founded in fact, but are most often founded in fear.

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A 6+ FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

In my opinion, Sid Hite is at his best when he describes daily life back in Virginia in his own unique way. That’s just what he does in *Cecil in Space*. What we have here is the mental meanderings of a sixteen-year-old boy who is trying to find his way in small-town Virginia. One reviewer has invoked a comparison to Holden Caulfield, which I think is unfair to both Hite and Salinger. Cecil is a pretty normal guy, not beset with alienation or anger. He does, however, wax philosophical as he shares with the reader his feelings and insights about life. He has enough familiarity with Einstein and Freud to be both dangerous and comical. The beauty of Hite’s writing about rural Virginia is that he can make enthralling reading out of what is ostensibly mundane.

Cecil has an aunt, a long-term psychiatric patient, who is convinced that he is an astronaut, hence *Cecil in Space*. Cecil has a fixation for a curvaceous, blond, rich girl, which he eventually turns in for the more earthly first love of his best friend’s sister. His thoughts on this budding relationship should bring back memories to those of us who can reach back that far. A Hite trademark is to insert a perspective on time into his stories. This is no exception:

More than three months have passed since Isabel and I connected . . . in the larger scheme of things, three months is hardly a blink of the cosmic eye. For example, light emanating from Alpha Centauri (the nearest star to our sun) on that night in early August has traveled a mere one and a half trillion miles and still has twenty-four trillion miles to go before reaching earth four years from now.

A Sid Hite novel is a delight to read, and *Cecil in Space* is another fine offering that many young readers should enjoy.

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* 5+ FI Reviewed by Laura Wadley

Melissa, Amanda, and Frank (Pee-Wee) Anderson spend a memorable week with their previously unusual and thoroughly unconventional Aunt Sally when their regular babysitter bails just before their parents leave for Paris. Mr. Anderson is fearful of Aunt Sally’s visit, but the children love her, and she introduces them to a host of eccentric characters from their father’s past: Great-Uncle Louis, who came for a week and stayed for six years; a chilly German neighbor whose dog, Mrs. Gunderson, was snuffed out under very mysterious circumstances; and Maud, who is rumored to have killed 80 cougars.

Aunt Sally also introduces these children, and the readers of this book, to the subtleties of family relationships, and to how precious those relationships will be later on when they have been damaged beyond repair.

*Trolls* is laugh-out-loud funny, full of a tender wisdom. Grown-ups and children alike should love this glittering gem of a book.

Reviewed by Lillian Heil

This informational book provides a fresh perspective on some of the foods commonly eaten around the world, including tomatoes, cucumbers, squashes, and peppers. What do all these foods have in common? They are “fruit vegetables,” which means they are the seeded fruit of the plant, but we eat them as vegetables because they are not sweet. The book is divided into chapters on the different foods, each giving the history of the plant’s cultivation, its spread around the world, facts on how and where it is commercially grown and marketed today, a recipe using each fruit vegetable, as well as amazing tidbits of trivia. The eye-pleasing format of the book includes plentiful illustrations and photographs. Learning is made fun for both young and adult.


Reviewed by Rachael W. Galvez

This collection of “short takes” reveals Johnson’s talent for observing people, imagining possibilities, and portraying characters. Her stories do not deal with common problems and cannot claim to be universal experiences, but they are fascinating in their uniqueness and cause readers to step outside their familiar realm. Both characters and experiences are made very real through Johnson’s poetic prose. From a girl who learns how to love life from a babysitter who is dying of cancer, to some boys who steal pets from the stores and give them to animal lovers, the stories range from humorous to heart-breaking. A very worthwhile read.

Reviewed by Robert L. Maxwell

Kids will love this "brief" history of underwear, which takes the subject from the Egyptians ("whether you were an Egyptian king, queen, or captive from across the desert, the loincloth remained the underwear of choice"), through the Renaissance ("some items made [their] legs bigger, some made [their] chest smaller, while others squeezed or pushed or lifted"), to Marie Antoinette's frolics in the palace garden in her petticoats, down to modern times.

Written in a lively style, this book also appeals to adults, as was evident in the reaction it got as it made its way around the BYU library cataloging department! "One thing is clear: from prehistoric times to the present, people have looked around and thought, 'I wonder what's under there?' Now, for the first time, the answer is revealed." Well, perhaps not for the first time, but possible for the first time in the pop-up format.

One of the most charming aspects of this book is that it allows the reader to lift up the characters' clothes and see just what is under there. Ever wonder what a bumroll looks like? Or braies? Or a hoop bustle? Here is your chance. As is the case with nearly all pop-up books, this one is fragile and probably requires adult supervision, especially for small children.


Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Catwings once more! These sequels to *Catwings* (this is number four) are not quite as intriguing as the initial idea of having a perfectly ordinary cat with wings, but the charming tone and characters remain popular.

This lucky cat family are sedately settled into country living but they aren't doing anything with their wings. Jane is going to do something with hers! In the face of all expected cautions, Jane flies off to the city to seek adventure and in short order becomes a star and a runaway. Her story has a happy ending (it seems a little easy, but these books are for young readers) with an old woman who loves Jane's mother and easily loves Jane also, wings and all.

The colored illustrations are satisfying, and the text, while being a real chapter book, is widely spaced and brief enough for moderately early readers.


Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

Be ready to sing your way through this pop-up and push-tab book. Lishak takes the traditional "Row, row, row your boat" and adds five other fun verses. Pop-ups add depth to each scene, and push-tabs make a frog disappear in the water, a cat appear in a window, a propeller to turn, and the door of the bus to open.

The push-tabs in this interactive book seem pretty durable, but young preschoolers should have an adult companion to make sure that the pop-up figures are not mistaken for push-tabs. Percy's cartoon illustrations of animals are simple and fun.

NR Adult NF Reviewed by Nancy Alder

These twenty-five story time programs are geared to three to five year olds. They provide storybook suggestions, easy finger plays, and elementary activities to produce 20-30 minute programs for holidays and kid-pleasing topics such as dinosaurs and ice cream cones. Full-size patterns are given should you choose to make a puppet or stuffed character.

A quick check of eight listed titles showed six to be out of print, making this a poor source for collection development. A skilled librarian would simply look through his or her library’s picture book collection and pull several pig stories or Easter tales. The finger plays are uninspired and familiar. The one suggested for the frog program was the same as for the elephant program and the pig program and the duck program and the Christmas tree program. All instruct you to make five characters and do slight variations of “Five Little Monkeys Sitting in a Tree.” One runs away or is carried off or falls down leaving four and then three and then . . . well, the pattern is obvious. Ho hum. And if a librarian or early childhood educator can’t make a star or jack-o’-lantern or ice cream cone without a pattern, another job or hobby is the solution. Our kiddies deserve better than the slim pickings here, and so do we.

✦✦✦✦


A 4-7 NF Reviewed by Carla Morris

Children’s Book and Play Review 21

Some people are a little fearful of hitting the year 2000, but kids can focus on all of the cool things surrounding the turn of the century. *The Kid’s Guide to the Millennium* will help children with the count-down. They can learn how to celebrate with ideas that range from challenging and caring to the weird and wacky. There are some great suggestions, such as a countdown. They can learn how to celebrate with ideas that range from the challenging and caring to the weird and wacky. There are some great suggestions such as a countdown calendar, how to make and send millennograms, and ideas for a millennium party, complete with millennium noise-makers, welcome light, and recipes.

Web sites that look into the future millennia and web sites announcing global celebrations for the year 2000 are also included. The last chapter ends on a serious note, “Your Gift to the Future.” This is a great teacher resource manual, but is also fun for the kid at home.

✦✦✦✦


A Adult NF Reviewed by Nancy Alder

Written to be used by adults working with young children, Marsh’s book offers simple, brief stories enhanced by paper cutting. This is one of a dozen or so titles that provide the beginner or manually inept with a shot at engaging kids in a fun storytelling experience. Marsh offers full-size reproducible patterns, easy instructions of the “point to ears, now show the two pieces” variety.

The stories are bare-bones enough that a teller with a bit of experience and imagination can personalize the tales and amplify them into a satisfying yarn. The no-artistic-talent-required cut-and-fold story enhancements are clever and
easy, and kids will love them. Familiar characters like rabbit and coyote will grab the listener’s attention—the teller is pretty well guaranteed an appreciative response to the story time session or filler activity. This book would be great to use with older kids who want to do their own storytelling with younger children.


Reviewed by Wendy Bishop

Menick’s first book for young readers is a story about survival without parents. Tanya’s tenacity and courage will make this story an instant success for teachers and parents.

Mother is trying to get her daughter to listen to the book she is reading aloud. Mother changes her mind and tells Tanya that rather than reading her a story out of a book, she will tell her a story. The story is about a girl much like Tanya—a fatherless child. The only difference is that the girl in the story has also lost her mother.

The adventure takes place in the Balkans during the year 1913. Tanya leaves the barn door open again, and the cow escapes to the bank of the river. Tanya’s father is angry at her negligence, and she springs into action. Tanya makes it to the shore where the cow, is just in time to see the bridge and her parents being swept away by the current. Tanya refuses to believe that her parents are gone. Surely a farmer down the river is busy helping them out of the water. Until they return, Tanya will take care of the farm. She makes muffins, hoping that the kitchen smells will keep memories of her mother close by. Tanya makes sure that the cow is in the barn behind closed doors and fed with fresh hay, hoping that her hard work will keep her father’s anger light when he returns.

However, Tanya’s parents do not return, and she cannot keep up with the farm chores. As the farm slowly slips into ruin, the neighbors are quick to claim the farm for themselves. With Tanya, the reader discovers the follies of greed. Now Tanya is forced to make adult decisions about the farm and her welfare. The challenges are just beginning.

With each flashback of that day by the river, Tanya remembers a new detail. Why had her father been so angry? Why was she the only one who made it to shore? Why had her mother said what she said?

In the end Tanya recognizes that her father’s anger was kindled by love. Young readers will understand that harsh love is sometimes necessary, and that the need to develop skills for a life’s trade can sometimes signify survival.


Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

A description of this delightful introduction to art appreciation is dull compared to the actual work. Using thirteen paintings from Botticelli’s “Primavera” to Rousseau’s “Tropical Forest with Monkeys” on double-page spreads, the author guides the reader to a better understanding of each painting. On the left-hand page is a brief background statement followed by “The Investigation,” which features details from the painting and related questions. On the right-hand page, “The Facts,” information about the painting, are presented, along with a color reproduction of the painting and brief information about the artist.

The purpose of the book is to encourage children to investigate paintings, not merely to look at them. A truly interesting way to start young people on the course to experiencing fine
art, iconography, and more, this book would be a great gift for a young family and perfect to share with a young person prior to a trip to a museum. School and public library collections would benefit from this addition.


Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Since the dawn of man, people have been watching the night skies and telling themselves stories of the star pictures they find there. The Great Bear, Swan, Fox, Scorpion, Wolf, Leo the Lion, Twins, Bull, Great Dog, Hare, Goldfish, Flying Fish, Whale, Peacock, Bird of Paradise, Toucan, Crane, Dragon—all these constellations are identified and their stories briefly told.

The illustrations are highlighted with glowing, iridescent stars, placed exactly as the stars in the heavens, while the background illustration shows the animal. This is the most appropriate use of the technique first seen in *Rainbow Fish* that I have seen.


Reviewed by Tom Wright

The Empress of Elsewhere is not the first story about a young girl hardened by traumatic childhood events and an honest, good-hearted character alleviates her trauma. But despite the familiar storyline, Nelson’s engaging writing and character development make this book well worth the read.

Told through eleven-year-old Jim’s eyes, the story has a cast of intriguing characters, including a capuchin monkey, nicknamed the “empress.” Jim is a red-blooded Texas boy who is given the “opportunity” to make some pocket money by babysitting a wealthy woman’s monkey and, as it turns out, her granddaughter J. D. Although J. D. does everything she can to alienate those around her, in the end, she, Jim, his little sister, Mary Al, and the monkey form a bond that allows revelation and healing to J. D.’s soul. Nelson handles the interchanges between the characters with delightful dialogue. Though the focus is on J. D.’s situation, Jim’s thoughts and actions are the real touchstone in the story. His good and caring nature that inspire in the reader hope that children like J. D. can rise above tragic beginnings.


Reviewed by Rachel Welton

Gina is much more physically developed than other girls her age. After she is assaulted by a group of boys at a public swimming pool in New York, Gina and her mother move to Santa Barbara to escape the pain and horror of the attack. As Gina begins eighth grade in her new California school, she is judged and gossiped about because of her mature figure. Rumors of her assault surface, and three boys plan to rape Gina because they think she has “tasted the fruit” once and wants it again. When two of the boys figure a way out of the plan, the ringleader decides to go in alone. He goes to Gina’s house and forces himself on her, but she bites, kicks, and runs away. The next day at school, the attacker is full of bravado, saying that he “scored” with Gina, bargaining that
she'll keep quiet. At first, that is exactly what Gina plans to do, but later she realizes that she does not need to live in fear. Gina tells her classmates about the incident in perfect detail, absolving her from an unearned reputation, and getting her attacker the punishment he deserves.

While dealing with real issues, this book may not be well received with the audience for which it is intended. Parents should read this book before allowing their children to read it, because the subject matter is mature. The story promotes an obvious agenda, but in the right situation with the right supervision, it could be a good springboard to discuss the important issues of rape and sexual harassment.


From the first American jet, the *Airacomet*, to the French-built trainer jet, the *Zephyr*, interesting facts about twenty-six jets are presented, accompanied by realistic computer-generated illustrations. The alphabetic arrangement allows quick access to each jet; but chronological order is lost, and most entries are not identified by date of origin. Average preschool children learning their ABCs are not interested in identifying jets; therefore, this alphabet book will be most used by older children to develop skills in identifying jets. A simple table of contents or index would have enhanced this source as a beginner's identification guide. A good choice for reluctant readers.


One of the most prominent illustrators of children's books takes pen in hand to thank a former teacher. *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, an autobiography of Patricia Polacco, encourages people to take the time to thank those who have made a difference in their lives.

Patricia (Trisha in the book) has a hard time reading. Five years ago, the thought of going to school and learning to read was exciting for her, but now the teacher has to help her with every single word. All she sees are wiggling shapes, and when she tries to sound out words, the other kids laugh at her. Trisha is a talented artist, and as the words and school get harder, she spends more time drawing. One day Trisha asks her
grandmother if she is different. Her grandmother’s answer is “To be different is the miracle of life. You see all of those little fireflies? Every one is different.”

Finally, Trisha moves from Michigan to California. But she has the same difficulties, even in the new school. Reading is a torture. The kids still laugh and tease and make her feel dumb. When she starts fifth grade, her teacher Mr. Falker becomes a friend, encourages her artistic talents, makes sure that no one teases her, and best of all, stays after school to help her learn to read.

This book is dedicated to George Falker, the real Mr. Falker, who helped Polacco learn to read and to know that she was special.


* 7-12 FI Reviewed by Rachael W. Galvez

This truly exceptional set of short stories was written by an author who has already established his reputation with classic books, such as The Chosen. Here Potok produces more young adult literature of the highest quality, but without the usual Jewish themes for which he is so famous. In these stories, young people deal with contemporary issues such as death, divorce, world injustice, step-families, and drugs, as well as several more coming-of-age events. Though the preceding list sounds dismal, the stories are positive, each with a hopeful tone that stresses overcoming obstacles and learning from them. I believe the subject, style, and format of the book will make it appealing even to reluctant readers. It is a very worthwhile read for anyone.


A Pre+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Three brothers—Yuck, Yucka-Drucka, and Yucka-Drucka-Droni—meet and marry three
sisters Zipp, Zippa-Drippa, and Zippa-Drippa-Limpomponi. They have children with equally outrageous names, but all of their pets are named ... Daisy.

Whew! What a story! What pictures! What a mouthful! Kids will beg to hear this one out loud again, and again, and again.


* All PB  Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

Arlene, a little fish called a brisling, is at home in a fjord. Surrounded by thousands of friends, Arlene’s ambition is to become a sardine. And she does. At the grown-up age of two, Arlene and her friends begin the process of becoming sardines. They are caught in nets and eventually die. They are then immediately packed on ice for the processing phase of their evolution. At the end of the processing phase, Arlene is a sardine.

Full-page watercolor illustrations document Arlene’s progress, and the book’s dust jacket is fashioned like a sardine can. Raschka covers the topic of death in a matter-of-fact manner. Wonderful informational words and phrases are embedded in the sparse text. For those who are squeamish about eating sardines: try them before passing judgment—they’re high in calcium.


* 6+ FI  Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

This is not Rinaldi’s first work about the American Revolution, but it surely is a pioneer book in dealing with interpersonal relationships only hinted at in most juvenile or adult historical fiction. The book begins as Caroline sees the English hang her fourteen-year-old friend and imprison her companion. The grisly details are not dwelt on, but their effect is noted more than once throughout the book.

Caroline is the daughter of a Southern plantation owner and a slave mother, but she has grown up as one of three children in the family and believes her mother to be dead. Her father, a rebel, fights the British, is imprisoned, then is in the West Indies somewhere, imprisoned again but still working for the Revolution. Her brother, fighting with the British, changes his belief, or recognizes it, after a few months and plays the game of a spy. Caroline’s sister falls witlessly in love with the British officer who occupies their home and betrays family and all for what she perceives as love from him.

Even with a brief outline, it becomes evident that this is not the average portrayal of war in the South but a densely written study of what war does to personal lives, hearts, and minds. Rinaldi includes careful and documented research on the battles, personages, and countryside of the time. Most of all, she writes of real, honest people whose world is turned every which way but loose.

There are no R-rated scenes in the book, but the format could seem offensive to some who prefer sweetness and light in historical fiction. The book is a masterful portrait of the lives of people at war, and the vivid details of the 18th century.
This substantial and variegated collection of familiar and striking poems, illustrated in color and form particularly appropriate for each poem, also includes side-bar notes containing a small portrait of the poet and the cogent facts of his life and work.

The reader will find here such disparate works as William Blake’s *Tyger* and Edward Lear’s *Calico Pie* and nature poetry from the far corners of the earth, side by side with the people poetry of Langston Hughes. And the illustrations accompany the words with a colored music.

If only one poetry collection could be included in a home, school, or public library, this would be an excellent choice.
A stutterer, Katerina Farnsworth is entering the seventh grade. Her self-consciousness isolates her from her classmates. She spends most of her time bird watching. However, events transpire that thrust her into the public arena. Katerina and her father, an aeronautical engineer, discover a new bird species that exists only in the wetlands near Farnsworth Aeronautics. The amazing agility of the “Silent Spillbills,” as they are affectionately named by father and daughter, inspires a new design for a jet aircraft. Inspiration and creation come together when the prototype crashes after some Spillbills are sucked into its engine. Katerina finds herself fighting her grandfather, founder and CEO, over the future of the birds.

Adroitly mingled amidst this chain of events are some charming characters, such as Katerina’s dry-witted German mother and her self-absorbed bully of a grandfather. Readers will also appreciate Katerina’s emerging romantic interests and her fear of communication because of her stuttering. Neither heavy handed nor overly sentimental, Seidler moves smoothly through the events and emotions of this story. Apart from its literary merits, this could certainly be integrated into science or social studies discussions on shrinking habitats or endangered species.


The couple are delighted to have such a treat, but just as the man is ready to cut open the melon, they hear a crying noise coming from inside. The man and woman pull open the melon with their hands, and inside they find a perfect baby girl, whom they name Uriko-hime—"melon princess."

Uriko grows up more quickly than the other children, and by the time she is five years old she has mastered the arts of millet-dumpling cooking and sword fighting. Her skills prove useful when the hideous hairy-kneed oni come and steal the villages’ babies to eat their belly buttons. Uriko, with the help of a few dutiful friends, saves the babies from the ogres and returns as a hero to her village.

Tasty Baby Belly Buttons is a charming tale that would be an excellent introduction to other Japanese folk tales. So’s whimsical illustrations depict the ancient Japanese landscapes and people perfectly. An author's note at the end of the story gives the reader some background to this folktale, which is a retelling of the story of Momotaro, a boy born from a peach who saves his village from
the belly-button loving oni. The author’s note gives a brief background of oral storytelling in Japan.

★★★★


* All PB Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

Elizabeti, a little Tanzanian girl, has a new baby brother, Obedi. As she watches her mother care for the newest member of the family, Elizabeti wants her own baby to hold and to hug. Because she doesn’t have a doll or the means to acquire one, Elizabeti eventually settles on a round rock which she names Eva. With Eva, Elizabeti mimics her mother, who bathes, washes, burps, and diapers Obedi. Elizabeti’s doll evokes a friend’s ridicule, but even the friend is inspired to find a rock and claim it as her own doll. After taking care of her chores, Elizabeti is distraught when Eva can’t be found. She searches among various rocks, and well-meaning relatives present her with Eva replacements, but these rocks are just rocks. Just before dinner, while putting the rice pot on stones that surround the fire pit, Elizabeti realizes that one of the stones isn’t a stone—it’s Eva! After a bit of polishing to remove the dirt, Eva is as good as new and Elizabeti is reunited with the doll she loves to hold and to hug.

A simple story of loving family ties and the imagination of children, this book features mixed media illustrations that are true to the text, but could stand on their own. A delightful and charming look at the Tanzanian culture and emotions common to the entire human family.

★★★★


* All NF Reviewed by Carla Morris

Tornado in a Bottle, Paper-Maiche Paste, Instant Finger Paint. *The Ultimate Book of Kid Concoctions* is the largest collection of top-secret concoction recipes available. More than 65 crazy concoctions are easily explained and illustrated, including recipes for favorites, like Treasure Stones, Shake and Make Ice Cream, Funny Putty, Scratch and Sniff Watercolors, and many more. Parents and teachers alike will consider this the must-buy book of the year, and the kids will agree.

★★★★


A 8-12 PT Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Poems written from the viewpoint of a young woman and dated in diary fashion trace the emotions of first love. In September they meet; in October “he exists for me . . . to fill the emptiness that is me”; in November, they date; he feeds the lion’s hunger inside her. Their love spans most of the school year, but in April, red wine and a wet road result in a car accident. They are unhurt except for stitches. Their parents forbid their seeing each other, but by May they are allowed to meet. Something has changed. The relationship ends, and she must try to heal. In June, she buries the mementos of the relationship under the tree where they first kissed. In July she dates someone new and muses, “Someday I will know what we had.”
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The sparse words of these free-verse poems capture most precisely the pleasures of first love and the pang of its loss. Turner uses the senses—taste, touch, smell, and sight—to heighten the emotional impact. The poems are complemented by eight oil paintings that quietly foreshadow the pang of lost love. Certainly this volume will appeal to the lovelorn, young or old, but on the practical side, it could also be useful in introducing free verse to young adults, many of whom will identify with the emotions of first love and may be motivated to try their own poetic expressions.


Reviewed by Gabi Kupitz

At the insistence of his parents, David Bernard Yaffe, acquitted of murdering his girlfriend, moves to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to repeat his senior year of high school at a prep school. Away from Baltimore and the publicity that has surrounded him during the trial of the past year, David is determined to finish high school and apply to college. Aunt Julia and cousin Lily do not welcome David into their home, although Uncle Vic is more accommodating. Eleven-year-old Lily is especially hostile. Going beyond childhood pranks and taunts, Lily sabotages David’s attic apartment during his absence. But the most cruel twist comes when Lily wants to know how it felt to kill. Did David feel powerful? David is put off by Lily and tries to avoid her, but he can’t shake the idea that he is going insane and that the ghost of his deceased older cousin, Kathy, whose room he occupies, is trying to communicate something to him. As David becomes increasingly aware of Lily’s psychotic behavior and the reasons behind it, he is both drawn to her and repulsed by her mere presence because he remembers his own recent past. In an attempt to help his young cousin, David approaches Uncle Vic and Aunt Julia, who refuse to believe that Lily needs professional attention. Rather, they cast doubt on David’s own sanity. David’s only escape from mental anguish lies in his grueling daily runs through the city, in the unexpected friendship with a fellow prep school student, and in the art student renting an apartment in his relatives’ home—until an unexpected plot twist validates David’s premonitions.

Multidimensional characters inhabit this thriller. The one-time use of the f--- word, a nongraphic reference to David’s involvement with his girlfriend prior to her death, and the topic of murder do not make this book appropriate for young children. However, young adults and adults will find not only an exciting story, but Werlin’s messages of love and forgiveness.


Reviewed by Carla Morris

How can a tattered old coat keep a family together? Author Elvira Woodruff visited the Ellis Island clothing exhibit, where a child’s woolen jacket, patched at the elbows and frayed at the collar, inspired her to write this story.

At Ellis, immigrants were inspected to see that they were healthy and capable to enter the United States. Their names, nationalities, and destinations were recorded by inspectors. They were given a quick physical examination that would determine if they could receive their landing card and live in America, or be separated from their family and be sent back. If they did not pass the physical, the doctor would use chalk to mark the back of their coat. They would be
detained and deported. This devastating experience was the immigrant’s greatest fear.

The Memory Coat tells the story of two cousins who lived in a Russian shtetl with their family. Grisha has recently been orphaned because of an epidemic that killed both of his parents. His mother made him a coat before she died. The coat is tattered, but it is Grisha’s last connection to his mother’s love.

During the ocean voyage, Grisha falls and scratches his eye. At Ellis Island, the inspector sees his reddened eye as an infection and marks a large yellow E on Grisha’s coat. Grisha’s uncle pleads with the inspector and explains that it is only a recent injury, but the inspector does not understand Russian.

In despair, the children are sent to sit on a bench and wait. Why can’t Grisha go with them? Is it because of his ragged coat? Suddenly, Rachel, Grisha’s cousin, has an idea. She turns the coat inside out, exposing the beautiful wool from his mother’s coat. Grisha’s uncle takes him to another line, where the doctor is kinder and more patient and understands Russian. The family receive landing passes and, most important, they are together.

A great read-aloud with author and historical notes on the last page that can lead to further study and discussion.

★★★★

Yolen, Jane. Pegasus, the Flying Horse.

A 3-6 PB Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

In ancient Corinth, the boy Ios and his father go to the market to buy a horse. Anxious to get to their destination, Ios rushes carelessly along, being cautioned by his father to be careful and prudent. Paying no attention to his father’s warnings, Ios skips recklessly along the path in eager anticipation, and suddenly stumbles over a beggar squatting by the roadside. “Listen to your father, little master,” the beggar growls. “To fly too high is to fall too far.”

So begins Yolen’s lyrical retelling of the classic Greek tale of Pegasus, the alabaster-winged horse and the handsome, yet boastful, Bellerophon, whose sole desire in life is to ride Athena’s mighty steed. Said to be the son of Poseidon, god of the sea, Bellerophon becomes possessed with his desire to ride Pegasus. He spends the night in Athena’s temple and in a dream is given a golden bridle, which enables him to mount the great horse. With his heart’s desire fulfilled, Bellerophon should be completely happy. But he is a god’s son, and “it is not in him to be content.” He becomes selfish and prideful, boldly declaring, “I do what I will!” No longer is he content with riding a flying horse, slaying hideous monsters, or being the son of a god. He is determined to become a god himself. He decides to fly to Mount Olympus “to claim his place among the gods.” As he urges Pegasus higher and higher toward his goal, Zeus thunders out a warning, “Do not try to fly too high, boy. It is not meant for a mortal to become a god.” Heedless of Zeus’s warning, Bellerophon drives Pegasus on, until the great, winged horse is stung by a gadfly, sending Bellerophon tumbling “down to earth where all the mortals dwelt.”

Richly detailed oil paintings create powerful images that draw the reader into the magic of mythology, inviting entrance into a world of monsters, gods and goddess, and their relationships with the mere mortals of the earth. This masterfully told tale of a young man’s foolishness is an excellent read-aloud that can easily be shared during a story hour, or among children of all ages.

★★★★