2001

Book Reviews

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Andersen, Bethanne; Crowe, Chris; Staheli, Jan; Quartey, Susie; Lee, Marilyn; Olson, Sarah; Kuttler, Sharon; Woods, Susan; Hamar, AnnMarie; Robertson, Peggy; Halliday, Irene; Jorgensen, Donna J.; Evensen, Nancy; Rabner, Lanell; Broadway, Marsha D.; Van-Wagenen, Annette; Tidwell, Sandra L.; Wadley, Laura; and Francis, Janet O. (2001) "Book Reviews," Children's Book and Media Review: Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol22/iss1/4

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Book Reviews

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Bethanne Andersen, Chris Crowe, Jan Staheli, Susie Quartey, Marilyn Lee, Sarah Olson, Sharon Kuttler, Susan Woods, AnnMarie Hamar, Peggy Robertson, Irene Halliday, Donna J. Jorgensen, Nancy Evensen, Lanell Rabner, Marsha D. Broadway, Annette Van-Wagenen, Sandra L. Tidwell, Laura Wadley, and Janet O. Francis

This book review is available in Children's Book and Media Review: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol22/iss1/4

* 3-6 FI Reviewed by Bethanne Andersen

This collection of tales relates profound truths. Through clever characters and animals, the reader views the world of human virtues and vices.

In this account, the fables unfold with direct simplicity. Pinkney's illustrations ripple through the text, adding power and mood. Years of watercolor work make these tales flow visually from the brush of a master-visual illustration at its best.


A 6+ FI Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Kit and his mum move to Stoneygate, an old mining town, to help his grandparents. In Stoneygate, John Askew waits for Kit with a kinship that extends back through years of family connection and brings Kit very close to the reality of the game called Death.

Askew is a child/man out of joint with time and place. A gifted artist without sensitivity, he is at odds with his depressed, abusive father as well as the bulk of the village. However, a fascinated group of young people follows him regularly though a fearful procedure to play a game called Death. Despite its exclusivity, the group invites—actually commands—Kit to join them.

Although it moves quickly, this is not an easily read book. A lot is implied and must be digested, but the story is conveyed with commanding skill. It is a definite must for thoughtful readers.


A 4-6 FI Reviewed by Laura Wadley

Miguel, his sister Juanita, and his mother move to Vermont after his parents' divorce. Miguel worries about fitting in, making new friends, and joining a Little League team. His worries increase when his Great Aunt Lola arrives from the Dominican Republic to care for him and his sister. Miguel is afraid his Aunt's flamboyant ways will alienate his peers; however, the whole town—including the resident curmudgeon, embraces her.

Neither preachy nor self-pitying, *How Tia Lola Came to Stay* is a warm-hearted affirmation of the basic decency of most people. Alvarez does a fine job of sharing her Spanish language and Dominican culture with young readers. Alvarez gently discourages stereotyping by offering a welcome, pleasantly readable introduction to Caribbean culture.


* 6+ FI Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

*The Wings of Merlin* is the final volume in *The Lost Years of Merlin* series. In this book, the opposing forces of Dagda and Rhita Gahr come face-to-face for the last time. Merlin has two weeks to unite the varied inhabitants of Fincayra in a fight against the forces of the underworld on the longest day of the year. Knowing he can't do it all by himself, he asks his friends and family to help. Rhia, Hallia, and Shim (the giant) go their separate ways; the final chapters of the
book reveal the fruits of their labors. Meanwhile, Merlin must find and encounter Slayer, a vengeful person from his past, who is maiming and killing Fincayra’s children. Lleu, the child Slayer first maimed, is a new character whose experiences with Merlin and his family help unify this epic adventure’s concluding volume. In the end, Merlin regains his long lost wings.

Barron presents believable characters involved in action and emotion-packed situations. The author emphasizes lasting values such as forgiveness, sacrifice, love, and mercy, applicable to any civilization—be it a community of living stones, walking trees, canyon eagles, dragons, dwarfs, or giants. This book contains some wonderful points:

**Importance of children:** “The world of a every child is untold—beyond any jewel, any treasure.” (p. 119)

**Home:** “I love this land, Caipre. So much I’ll give everything I have to save it.” “Then, my boy, it is truly your home.” (p. 194)

**Forgiveness:** “I forgive you... I felt something new, a strange feeling—of being lighter somehow. It began to fill me, expand within me, flow through my every vein. The feeling seemed delicate, even ethereal, and yet I knew somehow that it would last.” (pp. 255)

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- **B PreS-K PB**Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

Another Mother Goose (each year brings several) without any particular identifying difference in the broad selection of text but it contains markedly distinct illustrations. Generous photographs of brightly colored stitchery, including creatively appliquéd figures and an embroidered goose feather, appear on each page adding simple charm that may extend the breadth of the rhymes’ interest. Good enough to flesh out a collection.

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- **A 3+ NF**Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

Around 1970, scientists began to solve the mystery of why volcanoes and earthquakes often occur together. This well-written book poses seventy-eight questions about volcanoes and earthquakes each of which is followed by a clear answer and explanation. The following are some of the questions discussed in the book:

- How often do volcanoes erupt?
- Where are volcanoes?
- How often do earthquakes occur?
- How do you make buildings earthquake-proof?

The answers are enhanced by detailed watercolor drawings including exquisite illustrations of undersea volcanoes, collapsed buildings, and calderas. Readers will leave this book with an appreciation for the tremendous energy deep within the surface of the earth.

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- **B+ 3-6 FI**Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Self-proclaimed “bug freak” Adam Cricklestein is fed up with Jeb McCallister’s bullying. On an October Saturday, while watching *Frankenstein*, Adam decides to create a horrific monster bug to frighten Jeb, the police chief’s son. With some books from the library and a bug specimen catalog from the museum, Adam plans, creates, and brings to life his bug monster. He then struggles for months to get Frankenbug to eat and to fly. After Jeb smashes Adam’s science project, Frankie, in search of a sweet treat, pinches Jeb and begins a bug hunt that involves school kids, adults, and the police department. Frankenbug is found by the police chief, saved from extermination by Adam, and Jeb’s bullying deeds are exposed.

If one can set aside reality and believe that a kid can sew together various parts of a dozen or

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so insect specimens and bring this monster to life, this book will hold the attention of the young reader. The underdog and a monster bug are victorious. Not an award-winner, but a story that kids will enjoy.


Reviewed by Bethanne Andersen

In this version of Cinderella, the dazzling illustrations and exquisite details catch the reader’s attention, holding his gaze and making him hesitant before turning the page. Through the illustrations, the reader relives this classic through a fresh approach. Craft infuses this story with the richness of gold, tapestries, and midnight. The story is retold with strength, making the reader hope that the tenderness of the couple will last forever. The cruel comments of the sisters are silenced by exposure of the narrow view they hold of each other.

This is a visually rich book that does exactly what a fairy tale is supposed to do—take its readers into an ethereal world where one is likely to dwell among the fairest and kindest rulers.


Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Fourteen-year old Matilda is “thin and small, with long yellow braids and large, wary, sea-green eyes.” Standing in front of a scarred wooden door, she stares at the bright-yellow bone painted there. Blood and Bone Alley is her new home. Tutored by Father Leufredus and educated only in Latin, saintliness, and proper prayer, Matilda knew nothing of the world outside Randall Manor. Now, apprenticed to Red Peg the bonesetter, Matilda is quickly introduced to his many friends and neighbors. In private conversations with the Saints, Matilda tries to make sense of her new and very unfamiliar world in which she is expected to market, clean, tend the fire, mix potions, polities, and plasters, and help treat patients. Matilda learns the bone setting trade, surrounded by poor people who know how to joke and laugh, people who live and die hard. She soon realizes that Master Theobald, the learned town physician, really doesn’t know as much as about doctoring as Doctor Margery who has healing in her hands and love in her heart.

Matilda Bone is a delightfully fascinating story of medieval medicine. Concluding with an author’s note on medieval medical practices, Cushman has woven a tale in which the setting is more important than the heroine. Despite Cushman’s desire to tell a story and not write a textbook, her research into medieval medicine is far more interesting than the metamorphoses of saintly Matilda.


Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

Those who love dePaola’s previous books will treasure another personal narrative that takes the reader back to Tomie dePaola’s childhood. He shares with readers the funny and personal moments that made 26 Fairmount Avenue one of the nicest places to grow up.

Nothing is as exciting to Tomie as moving to a large house where his family awaits the arrival of a new baby. Sure that it will be a sister because that is what he wants, Tomie keeps busy with tap dancing lessons, a Peter Rabbit play, and painting while awaiting the baby’s arrival. This flowing narrative shows life through the eyes of a five-year-old.


Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen
After his mother dies of cancer, Rob and his father move to the Kentucky Star Motel hoping to start a new life. As usual, Rob is the brunt of teasing at school. Willie May (the motel’s maid) tells Rob that the rash covering his legs is sadness. “You keep all that sadness down low, in your legs. You not letting it get up to your heart, where it belongs. You got to let that sadness rise on up.” Rob forms a friendship with Sistine, an angry new girl who outwardly expresses her fury. When the principal determines that Rob’s rash is contagious and he should stay home from school, Rob is immensely pleased. Sistine daily comes to the hotel after school, using the excuse of bringing Rob his homework. The unsettled emotions both deal with, as well as the teasing they endure from schoolmates, create a bond between them. One day they find a caged tiger in the woods. Rob’s father’s questionable employer gives Rob the keys to the cage and the responsibility of feeding the tiger. The drama that unfolds symbolizes the leashing of unresolved emotions.

The book is symbolic and layered with meanings. It would provide a nice instructional basis for teaching symbolism to upper grade school children. The book reaches an impressive climax when Rob gets the keys to the tiger cage. Tension mounts as he struggles with his decision. The characters deal with real problems. Although the story is somewhat unlikely, the book has merit.


* 3+ FI Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

In this Hank the Cowdog adventure, a tough Rottweiler visits the ranch and chases down a fawn. That’s war! For Hank and Drover, this means war! The two see the Rottweiler again when they go to town and Hank, the Chief of Ranch Security, confronts him.

Hank and Drover continually wander from the trail in their conversations as in this example. “Very good. [Dover], Cat hair comes from cats. Hog hair comes from hogs. Dog hair comes from dogs.” “I’ll be derned. I didn’t know hogs had hair.” “They do. All fur-boring animals have hair. Hogs are boring animals. Therefore, they have hair.” “I thought they had bristles.” “No. You’re thinking of brushes. Brushes have bristles. Hogs have hair.” “I’ll be derned. What makes ‘em so boring?” “They’re boring, Drover, because they grunt all the time. If they had anything to say, maybe they wouldn’t be so boring, but their answer to everything is a grunt.” “Yeah, and who cares what a hog thinks anyway?” “Exactly my point. And let that be a lesson to you.”

Erickson’s thinking seems very dog-like; the language of all the characters rings true. It makes a fun read-aloud.


A 5+ NF Reviewed by Irene Halliday

Gold fever infected families as well as individuals in 1849. In late September, a group of 400 people, 1000 animals, and 107 wagons nicknamed “The Sand Walking Company” head south with Captain Jefferson Hunt, a Mormon guide. They plan to follow the Old Spanish Trail to Los Angeles, and then continue northward to the gold fields. However, once en route, a chance meeting with Captain Wesley Smith, a weathered-looking man, changed the lives of the majority of the company forever. Smith carried a map showing a shortcut that promised to cut 500 miles off the Sand Walker’s trip. Furthermore, the shortcut offered grass and water all the way to California. After considerable debate and despite Captain Hunt’s warning about taking an unknown route, all but seven of the wagons opted to follow Wesley Smith. Hunt continued south with the seven wagons that remained in his charge. On reaching Los Angeles in late December, Hunt’s group found they were many weeks ahead of those who had taken the shortcut. They had arrived safely with all of their possessions and enjoyed a happy...
Christmas, while those who followed Smith struggled, half-starved, in Death Valley.

This fascinating account describes the tragic results of an unwise decision and draws the reader into the lives and thoughts of the beleaguered shortcut travelers. All the events actually happened, all the people actually lived, and all the quotations come from journals, letters, books, or newspaper stories written by the survivors or interviews with them or their descendants. In the middle of a life or death struggle, genuine courage, faith, and heroism are manifested. Greed, selfishness, and despair are also present. Early photographs, engravings, and sketches add a feel for the period, while maps and photographs of various Death Valley sites enhance the narrative. Goldsmith’s account is well researched, including an index and bibliography as well as chapter notes. Children will easily identify with the adventures of the younger Sand Walkers. Best of all, Goldsmith’s first book reads like a novel. We genuinely come to care about these families in their plight. As if anticipating her readers’ interest in the survivors, Goldsmith includes a chapter, “The families after Death Valley,” which follows them for the rest of their lives. Lost in Death Valley would be a wonderful way to make a history/social studies unit on the California Gold Rush come to life.


B K-3 PB Reviewed by Peggy Robertson

Nathan, Nora, Nelly, and Ned are drawing pictures for their mother’s birthday gift, but not Nicky. He is too busy playing basketball. At the insistence of his siblings, he takes a few moments to scribble a few lines. Mother Rabbit is impressed with the carrot, sunshine, flower, and tree four of her children drew, but she is particularly interested in Nicky’s scribbles. When asked what he drew, Nicky describes for his mother a wonderful birthday adventure through a forest, to the sea, and finally onto a boat where a birthday celebration awaits them. Mother Rabbit is so delighted with each of the pictures she hangs all five in a row, with Nicky’s right in the middle.

Gorbachev illustrates his story with pen-and-ink and watercolor artwork. His illustrations capture the individuality of each little bunny and the delight of Mother Rabbit at having five creative and unique children. Young children will enjoy this story and perhaps be inspired to do a little drawing themselves.


A 4-8 FI Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Fourteen-year-old Hope has been in foster care most of her life. She carries her few valuable possessions in a worn-out backpack. Hope had grown close to some families in Nebraska who wanted to adopt her but decide not to when they find they are going to have a baby of their own. Not wanting to go through this ordeal again, Hope refuses to get close to anyone. When Hope’s new foster mother, Sarah, takes her to the once working Minnesota farm she grew up on, Hope is determined to not let Sarah or Sara’s mother, Anna, touch her emotionally.

Through the letters and diaries of four girls who lived there in 1869, 1900, 1936 and 1960, Hope gains a sense of family without the need of blood ties. Each girl, in her own way, has saved and recorded something important about the life of the farm and its beautiful meadow. When a tornado hits their small town, Hope is left alone at the farm to watch over it. She reads Susan’s teenage diary and determines to go to the meadow, even if it is dark. While there, Hope breaks her arm, loses her mother’s ashes in the grass, and finally makes a connection with Sarah and Anna who come looking for her.

This story is skillfully told, the outcome believable, and the reading thoroughly enjoyable.
Haduch’s book is an entertaining, comprehensive introduction to nutrition. Kids learn how their body breaks down the food they eat, how food is turned into energy, and why it’s important to eat a variety of foods and drink plenty of water. Aside from his discussion of vitamins and minerals, Haduch also tells kids how advertisers target their age group when marketing products. He warns them about the dangers of fad diets and relying solely on pills to get nutrients the body needs. He does all this with a terrific sense of humor and a text so wonderfully written that you forget you are actually learning something.

The author talks to kids on their level. He has the ability to explain complicated concepts in a way kids will understand. There are cartoon drawings, food jokes in the margins, and interesting “did-you-know?”-type facts scattered throughout the text. Haduch includes several easy recipes kids can make using the microwave. There is a glossary and a selected bibliography for further reading at the end of the book.


* 3-6 NF PB  Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Did you know that a single chocolate chip cookie will give you enough energy to walk 150 feet? In a typical day you exhale enough water to fill a soda pop can? Or that the lump of chewed up food you swallow is called bolus? These are some of the interesting facts Haduch presents in *Food Rules!* Haduch’s book is an entertaining, comprehensive introduction to nutrition. Kids learn how their body breaks down the food they eat, how food is turned into energy, and why it’s important to eat a variety of foods and drink plenty of water. Aside from his discussion of vitamins and minerals, Haduch also tells kids how advertisers target their age group when marketing products. He warns them about the dangers of fad diets and relying solely on pills to get nutrients the body needs. He does all this with a terrific sense of humor and a text so wonderfully written that you forget you are actually learning something.

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* A 3-6 NF PB  Reviewed by Susan Woods

This magnificent book answers the question “Is it possible for children to make a difference in the world?” The answer comes with beautiful illustrations and interesting text about the lives of twelve children, told in words they might have used. Among the children featured are Anne Frank, Felix Mendelssohn and his sister Fanny, Pocahontas, and Wilma Rudolph. Each child in the book comes from a different country—Germany, West Africa, Tibet, Japan, and others.

Hazell has brought together the stories of some of the most exceptional young people in the history of the world. These children have overcome terrible physical disabilities and prejudices to inspire those who come after them. Cann’s portrayal of them is colorful and believable.

*The Barefoot Book of Heroic Children* is a compilation of stories that can add to any history lesson and be used to motivate and encourage children to be brave and to follow their dreams. Hazell’s words in the introduction read: “Even when you’re young, your voice can count; your example can change other people’s attitudes; your opinion does matter.”

The book contains a table of contents, as well as a bibliography, referring children to other books on their level where they can learn more of these heroic children.

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A 6-9 FI Reviewed by Sharon Kuttler

Abandoned as an infant in a department store, Tom Mullen has spent most of his thirteen years being shuffled from one foster home to another. He hears rumors that a mass grave has been discovered on his school grounds. While investigating the gravesite, Tom falls through a hole and back in time to Ireland in 1847, during the great potato famine. He rescues a drowning boy who looks exactly like himself. The boy’s family, the Monaghans, takes Tom in and teaches him what it is like to have caring parents and siblings. Tom slips back and forth between Ireland and his dreary modern life in 1974 Liverpool. Despite the hardships of famine and disease, Tom prefers his life with the Monaghans. The Monaghans travel to Liverpool, along with their fellow Irish immigrants, in hopes of finding passage to America. Many die of starvation and typhus, forming the origin of the mass grave. Tom’s journeys into the past reveal clues about his family background which in the end result in a reunion between Tom and his natural parents.

This book is part historical fiction and part time-travel fantasy. The desperate living conditions of the Irish during the potato famine are vividly portrayed. An Author’s Note describes the real-life events that inspired this book. A mass grave was actually discovered at St. Oswald’s in Liverpool in 1973, which contained over 3500 coffins. The coffins were removed and incinerated secretly. The characters in this book are three-dimensional and appealing, and the story is intriguing and well written. The ending is satisfying though far-fetched.

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A PreS-3 NF PB Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

Ever noticed how quickly even the grandest sandcastle crumbles when a big wave comes in? Jesus told a story about a man who built not a sandcastle, but a real house on the sand. Guess what happened to it? Thus begins “A Tale of Two Houses,” the story that Hoffman wrote about “The House on the Rocks.”

This book comprises eight parables retold from the scriptures. Jesus told these stories to help people understand that God’s law is not like human law. Sometimes He would explain the parables, and sometimes he left it up to the people to work out the second meaning. Each story in this book is prefaced by an introduction and followed by a clear and concise explanation, some of which challenge readers to think of an explanation for themselves.

Morris’s subdued watercolor illustrations effectively capture the feeling of the landscape at Jesus’ time. This well-written book makes the scriptures accessible to our day.

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A 4-6 FI Reviewed by Sarah Olson

Primrose is treated as an orphan when her parents disappear in a storm off the coast of their little Canadian fishing village, but she is convinced that they are still alive. “Haven’t you ever just known something deep in your heart without reason?” Primrose asks, searching for understanding from her townspeople.

*Everything on a Waffle* is the narrative of Primrose’s search—the search to find peace, happiness, and understanding from the new adults in her orphan life. She turns to Miss Perfidy, a mothball-scented babysitter; Uncle Jack, an enthusiastic salesman; Miss Honeycut, an English-aristocrat-turned-guidance-counselor; Evie and Bert, kindhearted foster parents; and Miss Bowzer, the chef and proprietor of Primrose’s favorite restaurant, The Girl on the Red Swing, where everything—including pork chops—is served on a waffle. Recipes included.
Horvath’s style is delightful and refreshing. Reading this novelette is like drinking cool lemonade.


A 5-7 NF Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

Where did “Cabbage Patch Dolls” get their name? Where in California is the annual Broccoli Festival? Where did the term “iceberg lettuce” originate? Learn about the history, propagation, uses and nutritional value of cabbage, broccoli, artichokes, spinach, Belgian endive, and lettuce in *Green Power*, part of the *Plants We Eat* series. Each vegetable is discussed in a separate chapter, complete with a recipe.

Hughes’ informative text is arranged around carefully placed insets, such as “Dig In,” which includes the recipe, and “It’s a Fact,” which provides nutritional information. Numerous illustrations, including photographs and charts showing each vegetable’s growth, add to the book’s appeal. Bolded text appears in a glossary at the end of the book along with a “Further Reading” section and an index.


A 5-7 NF Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

How did the “doughnut” get its name? Which of all shelled nuts is most sold worldwide? Which nut is the hardest to crack? Questions about the history, propagation, uses, and nutritional value of pecans, walnuts, almonds, pistachios, cashews and macadamias are presented in *Hard to Crack: Nut Trees*, part of the *Plants We Eat* series. The introduction establishes the background of why plants are important. Each nut is then discussed in a separate chapter, complete with a recipe.

Hughes’ highly informative and interesting text is arranged around carefully placed insets such as “It’s a Fact,” color and black-and-white illustrations (many are photographs), and charts showing each nut tree’s flower and developing and mature fruit. The publisher also makes unique use of background color and font sizes. For example, some words are circled in blue, and “hand-printed” facts about the word appear in the margin. The historical information about each nut is especially thorough and up-to-date. Bolded text appears in a glossary at the end of the book along with a “Further Reading” section and an index.


A 4-7 FI Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

In June of 1943 Eva, Rachel, and Papa are forced into a tiny attic room in the Jewish ghetto in Bedzin, Poland. When the Nazis pick up Rachel, Papa finds a way to send Eva to her in the labor camp in Czechoslovakia. Twelve-year-old Eva is assigned to spin thread on a dangerous machine to make uniforms and blankets for the Nazi soldiers. Starved, beaten and humiliated, every choice Eva makes must keep them alive for just one more day, one more hour. Surrounded by filth, constant death, and lines of prisoners marching to Auschwitz, Eva learns to survive. Her faith that God has not forgotten them, a yearning to see Papa again, and an indomitable will to not give up see Eva through sickness, cruelty and ever increasing danger.

*Torn Thread* is a fictionalized account of Isaac’s mother-in-law’s experiences in a Nazi labor camp in Czechoslovakia from 1943-1945. Isaac, author of the delightful *Swamp Angel*, tells a powerful, compelling story of familial love and survival every bit equal to Schoschana Rabinovici’s *Thanks to My Mother*, the 1998 Batchelder Award winner.

A 3+ NF Reviewed by Annette Van Wagenen

Due to rampant poaching, a forensics lab dedicated to solving wildlife crimes was set up under the Law Enforcement Division at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In this book, Jackson tells about these “wildlife detectives” and their fight to curb the rise of illegal slaughtering of endangered animals.

Many facts told come from the Wildlife File, including the story of Charger, one of Yellowstone’s largest bull elk, weighing eight hundred pounds. Charger survived the fires in 1988 that destroyed one-fifth of the park, but fell victim to night poachers. After the media covered this beloved animal’s death, the National Park Service received hundreds of letters and telephone calls from citizens and organizations nationwide. Jackson goes into great detail to explain the steps taken to find the guilty men.

The photographic shots of Charger and other endangered species help explain the plight of the animals. Readers will gain a greater awareness of these heinous crimes against animals and the efforts to stop their slaughter.


A- 4-8 NF Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

From scientific facts to personal stories of the problems, pleasures, joys, and sorrows of being a twin, this book explores everything from what makes twins to the emotional and psychic connections between twins to multiple and conjoined twins. A one-page “Twins Resources” offers selected information about publications, web sites, and special events or services for twins. Although the index lacks depth, the arrangement of chapters and subheadings aids in finding specific information.

Jussim, a freelance writer who has authored several nonfiction books, has produced a highly readable book. The “Source Notes” suggest that the author’s research focused on popular resources including Twins Magazine, Life, newspaper articles, and television news programs. The plentiful black and white photographs add to the book’s appeal.


B 3-5 FI Reviewed by Susie Quartey

Lydia makes stuffed rabbits come to life with the love and care she puts into making them. After Jeremy is given his name and told someone special is waiting for him, his adventures begin. He has a long journey ahead...
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and makes several interesting friends along the way.

Children will enjoy this story in a manner similar to A.A. Milne's books about the adventures of Winnie the Pooh.

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** K-3 NF PB Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

_Dance, Sing, Remember_ introduces Jewish holidays and festivals, their origins, and how they are celebrated. Some holidays are well known, such as Hanukkah and Passover. Kimmelman also discusses several that readers might not be as familiar with. For example, Yom Hashoah is a day to remember the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Tu B'Shvat celebrates the planting of trees in Israel. Shavuot commemorates Moses receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The author explains when Jews build sukkas, or "booths," how they celebrate the Sabbath, and why Purim is such a noisy holiday.

Kimmelman uses simple language to explain and describe each holiday. Recipes, songs, games, and stories enhance her text. Eitan's paintings in blues, greens, and purples capture the mood and spirit of each festival. The black and gray double-spread painting that commemorates Yom Hashoah stands in striking contrast to these bright, colorful illustrations. _Dance, Sing, Remember_ is a well-written and interesting introduction to Jewish customs and practices.

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** A 4-8 FI Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

Emily (thirteen) and her sister, Lily (twelve), argue constantly about everything. To Lily it seems that everyone likes Emily better, especially her family, even though Emily is bossy. In the summer of 1932 Great-aunt Nell comes to visit. She has lived an exotic life, having most recently served as a missionary in India. Lily finds that she and Aunt Nell are soul mates.

Aunt Nell wants to rescue an abused horse from an ornery neighbor and offers the farmer forty dollars for the horse. She tells Lily the horse will be hers. Before the horse can be purchased and brought home, however, Emily gets polio and all the family's money is needed to bring electricity to their house and to pay for an iron lung.

In her desperation, Lily goes out one night and brings the horse home to her secret place. With good intentions, she overfeeds the horse and must call her father to help. She nurses the horse back to health, teaches her to jump from the quarry wall into the pond and then sells her to the circus for five hundred dollars to help her family. Toward the end of the book, Emily asks Lily to help her die by pulling the plug on the iron lung and plugging it back in after she dies so her family won't know. After a few weeks of avoiding Emily and worrying about it, Lily tells Aunt Nell about her worries that she caused the illness and what Emily has asked her to do. Nell explains how it cannot be her fault. That night, Emily dies. Shortly thereafter, Aunt Nell leaves to get back to India.

There are a lot of issues in this little book, but they are gently told and are woven into a touching story. It is as beautifully written as Kinsey-Warnock's other books, _The Canada Geese Quilt_ and _As Long As There Are Mountains._

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** A 3-7 FI Reviewed by Donna J. Jorgensen

_Klass’_ _Little Women Next Door_, a fictionalized account of real events, brings to mind visions of Louisa May Alcott. In 1843, Louisa's family joined with others near Harvard village in Massachusetts in a social experiment they called "Fruitlands." This group of
Transcendentalists wanted to live as families, eating and wearing nothing that was imported from another country or that would “rob” an animal. They wanted to live without using money. The experiment was short-lived.

Susan, a purely fictional character, and Louisa are both ten years old. They form a fast friendship, and Susan joins the children of the group for school each day. Since she was little, Susan has stammered and been shy and sickly.

Brother Bronson (Alcott) teaches her not to stammer and to think for herself. The book examines the beliefs of the Consociates and others like them. The children interact with Thoreau and Emerson. The book gives a clear idea of their philosophy and some of their problems. The friendship between Susan and Louisa is believable. There are some factual errors: Susan’s father is not likely to have had fresh corn, potatoes and beans to take to his neighbors on June 1st, as the author has him do.


A PreS-3 PB Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Touche L’Engle-Franklin, an irrepressible poodle with a “chrysanthemummy” tail, struggles to accept the new hairless, tail-less, “inferior canine Jo” into the family. Touche is bewildered by this new arrival, who requires multiple feedings during the day, wears white cloths on her bottom, and is taken out in a carriage. By autumn, Jo is almost the same size as Touche but has little more hair. “I am afraid she is just of an inferior breed called ‘baby,’ and there is nothing that can be done about it.” Touche does her part to care for Jo and comes to the conclusion that there should be at least two dogs in every home.

L’Engle draws from her own poodle’s coping experience when she brought her first baby home. Told from Touche’s point of view, the story is filled with humor and warmth. Davenier’s pen, pencil, and watercolor illustrations extend both the humor and warmth, capturing the proud, precocious poodle and her unexpected dilemma. An excellent read-aloud.


* 2-6 NF Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

“Wanted! Home for Children!” This Lebanon, Missouri, newspaper advertisement announced the arrival of an orphan train in December 1909. More than 150,000 children, orphaned by disease, poverty, or the effects of war, came to forty-seven states between the years 1854 and 1929 on orphan trains. The Children’s Aid Society of New York City made orphan trains possible. Its founder, Charles Loring Brace, believed that city life was a bad influence on children. Littlefield’s title, part of the “Picture the American Past” series, explains how the healthiest and handsomest of the homeless and orphaned children were given the opportunity to leave their destitute conditions and the harsh influences of the big city to travel on trains to families in the West. Orphan children were “come and see children.” Families came to the appointed town building to look over their prospects. Some people only wanted another pair of hands to help with farm or housework and provided the children with little more than shelter and food. Other families treated these love-starved children as their own and gave them regular opportunities to live meaningful, productive lives within a loving family.

Numerous photographs of orphan-train children complement Littlefield’s informative and precise text. The reality of this part of American History can be brought to life for children through the “Be An Orphan Train Detective” section at the end of the book, which explains how children can find out if there are descendants of orphan train children in their city or state. It even has a sample letter! “Note to Teachers and Adults” explains activities to do and thought-provoking questions to ask so children can really think about what these children experienced. Other helps include
Resources on the Orphan Trains (a listing of print and electronic resources), New Words, Index, Time Line, and About the Author. The video “Orphan Train,” produced 1988 by Best Film & Video, could be viewed in conjunction with this title.

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* 4-7 FI Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

"Mother?" There was no reply. She hadn't expected one. Her mother had been dead now for four days, and Kira could tell that the last of the spirit was drifting away...now she was all alone.

In the tradition of The Giver, master storyteller Lowry weaves a tale of a futuristic society where every person has a single task to perform; physical imperfection and weakness are not tolerated; violence, treachery and fear govern daily life; and community memory is memorialized once a year with the singing of the Ruin Song. Kira, a young crippled orphan, born with a magical talent for weaving pictures of thread, is summoned before the Council of Guardians, where her fate is to be determined. In a surprising turn of events, her life is spared, and she is taken to live in the Council Edifice, where she is charged with repairing, restoring and eventually completing the Singer's robe. Sharing a wing in the Edifice is Thomas the Carver, responsible for restoring the Singer's staff, and baby Jo, the future Singer, whose lilting voice brings a smile to even the lowliest beggar in the Fen. Tended and fed, in exchange for serving the community with their unique talents, these children were to become the caretakers of the future, the artists that colored history. Kira's quest to find her identity takes her on a journey of self-discovery that changes her life forever. Gathering Blue is a thought provoking examination of the importance of love, family, friendship, community, knowledge, and creativity that leaves the reader haunted by questions of what face the future will wear and what values will govern its inhabitants. Lowry's characters reach out and embrace the reader, reminding us that true creative power comes from within, as each individual is allowed to weave his or her own history and sing his or her own song.

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* 5+ FI Reviewed by Marilyn Lee

Richard, a monomaniacal baseball jock, avoids dealing with the prejudicial “stuff” (as he calls it) of 1975 Boston through his single-mindedness. When Napoleon, a cultured, intelligent Jamaican, enters his classroom Richard is forced to move outside his self-defined world. The action in Gold Dust is incidental to the characterization, which is flawless. Although written in first person with jock lingo, bravado, and benevolent sarcastic trash-talk clearly from the seventies, Gold Dust is still understandable today. The delineation of all characters is crisp, and the dialog is magical. This is definitely a book to read out loud. The profound insights the boys learn are crafted into the dialog convincingly and, though they seem wise beyond the norm, they seem natural to the situation and conversation. The book would readily create a springboard discussion of many vital issues young people face today.

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A 2-4 FI Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Judy Moody, approaching the beginning of third grade, does not want to give up summer. She doesn’t want to brush her hair every day, memorize spelling words, or sit next to Frank Pearl (who eats paste). She is in a bad, mad-face mood; gives troll-eyed stares to her little brother Stink; and roars at her cheerful mother. When she gets to school, however, she concludes that Mr. Todd, her new teacher, is probably going to
be all right and gets excited about making a “Me Collage.” Maybe third grade won’t be so bad after all, even if she does have to sit by Frank (no paste in his desk yet) and sit at the front of the classroom.

Judy’s moods are passionate, intense and funny. Seven-year-old Judy is as full of vinegar and glee as she is grumpy. She decides on her favorite pet, discovers a club she can belong to, assigns the “worst thing ever” and the “funniest thing ever,” then reassigns them, as she puts together her “Me Collage” and turns her bad mood into a very good mood. This would make a great read-aloud and could serve as an introduction to a similar “Me Collage” project.


A 8-12 NF Reviewed by Janet O. Francis

This history of medical wonders explains and describes clearly the process that mankind has gone through to enhance the human body. Beginning with early records showing cavemen with wooden aids and a Persian soldier with a wooden foot (outfitted so he could return to battle), the facts are interesting, sometimes even amazing. Making the comment more than once that war is the best friend of progress in healing/replacement, the book touches on each development in its historical context and moves surely into modern times and bionic developments.

There are not a lot of case studies, but the specific and lengthy one describing Jeremy’s experience from the loss of his leg to his prosthesis therapy and eventual adaptation is matter-of-fact and believable and could be a real bench-mark to someone in a similar situation. A substantial bibliography and index make research in this area easily accessible, and the tone, photographs, and breadth of coverage make it a keeper for junior high and high school libraries.


A 6-9 FI Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

“How does it feel to be related to someone like your brother? Bang, bang,” a girl said to Ophelia as she laughed and walked away. “Hey look,” said a boy she passed in the hall. “She’s got blood on her shoes.” Then during a spelling test, the girl behind her leaned in close and whispered, “How do you spell murder?” Ophelia never learned how people found out about her family, just that when they did, everything in her life changed. Orphaned after a terrible family tragedy that killed her brother and parents, Ophelia moves from one foster home to the next, never finding peace or even a welcome place. Then she meets ninety-two-year-old Portia McKay, a neighbor woman whom she agrees to read to. Portia also has a painful, deeply hidden secret that she has carried for nearly eighty years. Sensitive narrative skillfully moves back and forth between both characters, soon revealing that Ophelia and Portia have more in common than their Shakespearean names. As their individual tragedies unfold, Portia comes to realize that Ophelia holds the key to release her from a life-long emotional prison. Meyers masterfully weaves together past and present in an emotionally intense, fast-paced story in which friendship becomes trust and trust becomes deliverance.


A PreS-2 PB Reviewed by Peggy Robertson

As part of the “If you Give a . . .” series, *If You Take a Mouse to the Movies* describes the trouble it can be to take a mouse to the movies. Set at Christmas time, the mouse first wants popcorn. That reminds him how fun it would be to decorate a Christmas tree. Of course every tree needs ornaments. The mouse also asks for a snow fort, blanket, Christmas carols, more
popcorn, and eventually another trip to the movies.

Children familiar with this series will recognize both the format and the illustrations. The simple text makes it a good practice book for beginning readers. Preschoolers delight in guessing what the mouse will want next. Because all of the books in this series end the same way, everyone can guess the last page. Although set at Christmas time, this is a delightful read any time of the year.

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* PreS-3 PB Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Ling Cho is a prosperous farmer who wants to share his bountiful crop of wheat with his less fortunate friends Ben Lo, Tsung Tae, and Quan Jen. Not wanting to offend them by offering the wheat as charity, he makes a deal with them instead. Each man will take a wagonload of wheat to sell in the marketplace, and then share the profits equally with Ling Cho. The kindhearted farmer, however, soon discovers how devious his friends are. The only thing all three give him is an excuse about why they returned without money. Ben Lo tells Ling Cho he was attacked by a horrible wheat-eating monster. Tsung Tae says he lost Ling Cho’s half of the money. Quan Jen admits he never made it to the marketplace because he used the wheat to feed his starving family.

After hearing his friends’ tales of woe, Ling Cho apologizes profusely to Ben Lo and Tsung Tae telling them he never meant to cause them such distress. He promises he will not put them in such a difficult position again by refusing to allow them to help with the next harvest. Ling Cho chastises Quan Jen not only for taking his wheat but also for allowing Quan’s wife and children to go hungry for so long. He reminds Quan that true friends put aside their pride and accept help from others. Cho tells him that he will repay his debt by helping with the harvest every autumn and accepting as payment two wagonloads of wheat for his family.

Pacilio’s first book is a witty, rhymed story of honesty, wisdom, and friendship that teaches without begin preachy. Illustrator Scott Cook creates yellow, brown, and gold backgrounds reminiscent of wheat fields and characters that are amusing and energetic. His ability to capture a wide range of emotion down to the subtlest facial expression is impressive.

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A K+ PB Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

“[I] know you’ll be reading this someday when your heart is aching,” writes Trisha’s mother to her beloved daughter. This first person account of Betty Doll’s life told by Trisha’s mother (Mary Ellen Barber) gives the reader insight into her life. Life begins for Betty Doll after a fire destroys all five of Mary Ellen’s dolls. Mary Ellen and her mother find some fabric and begin to create a new doll. Betty becomes Mary Ellen’s constant companion and gives her comfort. Betty Doll goes to school, has formal tea parties, travels to Chicago, and even saves the lives of Mary Ellen and her brothers. In time, Betty Doll is put on the shelf in a place of honor until adult trials bring her out again. Mary Ellen divorces and moves back with her parents. At her mother’s death, there is again a move. Trisha is given the doll to hold to make her feel better. Betty Doll “kissed away tears, soothed hurt knees and is a guest at hundreds of tea parties and slumber nights” as the grandchildren are raised. She is again pulled from the shelf when Mary Ellen finds out she has cancer.

An object often “helps us remember . . . warm things.” Through Betty Doll we see a child turning into an adult. The book shares warm family relationships. The consistent comfort Betty Doll provides helps Mary Ellen and her family through the changes in their lives. The capturing pencil drawings are splashed with watercolor to focus the reader on Betty Doll. It
is a warm, reassuring book to curl up with and enjoy.

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A K+ PT Reviewed by Sandra L. Tidwell

The title of this book immediately caught my eye; and the poem from which it is named, “It’s Raining Pigs & Noodles,” is my favorite of the one hundred plus poems published in Prelutsky’s latest collection. All of Prelutsky’s poems rhyme and are full of wordplays, puns, and interesting type styles and fonts. For example, the dragon’s booming voice in “I Chased a Dragon Through the Woods” (p. 12-13) is written in a fancy, bold, medieval-looking font. The word “HICCUP” is on a slant in the poem by the same title (p. 34). The words in “I’m Caught Up In Infinity” (p. 64) follow the curvature of the infinity symbol; and the text to “My Sister Shrieked, Astonished” takes the path of the errant boomerang talked about in the poem. These are just a few examples of Prelutsky’s creative approach in formatting his poetry.

Some of the poems, such as “You Can’t Make Me Eat That” (p. 43) and “I Ate a Tooth This Morning” (p. 22), express the thoughts of many children. There are some “yucky” themes also, which kids will love, including “The Time Has Come” (about a moldy, mildewed jack-o-lantern), “Worm Puree,” and “Deep in Our Refrigerator.” Each page is enhanced by James Stevenson’s expressive cartoon illustrations.

Prelutsky’s poems about people’s feelings and relationships with others and animals, both imaginary and real, could easily be used in the classroom or home. Even small children will enjoy the meter and rhythm of the rhyming stanzas. At home, Mom and Dad could approach the subject of personal hygiene with “Grungy Grace” (p. 32), “Why Do I Have to Clean My Room” (pp. 102-03), or “There was Unabated Chaos” (p. 134). I suggest that readers spend a relaxing hour reading through the whole book. After reading each poem, a quick look in the title and first line index at the back of the book will bring one’s favorites to mind for a special event or presentation. If you’re planning a poetry unit, Prelutsky’s creative formats will introduce many interesting possibilities your students.

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B+ 4-8 NF Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Summers are hotter, ice glaciers are melting, and sea levels are rising. From carbon cycles to greenhouse gases, the earth’s climate is growing warmer. What can be done? Less use of fossil fuels, more alternative energy sources, major reforestation, and fuel-efficient automobiles would help. In 1997, representatives of more than 160 nations agreed to the Kyoto Protocol, which would require 38 industrialized nations to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and five other gases to below 1990 levels.

This revised and updated edition of Pringle’s *Global Warming: Assessing the Greenhouse Threat* (Little, Brown, 1991) contains new information and photographs. Some young readers may be put off by the abundance of facts, figures, and percentages; but these are the basics of science and provide a convincingly sober look at the human-induced climate changes of the last century. They also warn that action should be taken now.

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* 6+ BI Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Sills’ book is an outstanding introduction to the lives and works of six celebrated women photographers. Imogene Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, and Lola Alvarez Bravo are women pioneers in the field of photography. Their works focused on nature, the lives of American
migrant workers, and twentieth-century Mexico, respectively. Sills also profiles three contemporary photographers: Carrie Mae Weems, whose works depict the lives of African-Americans; Elsa Dorfman, who was greatly influence by the Beat Poets of the 1950s and 1960s; and Cindy Sherman, who often appears in her own photographs.

Sills discusses what motivated each of these women to become photographers. She emphasizes that their work is an art form by explaining that photography, like painting, must make good use of composition, lighting, and subject matter, and that photographs are “creations of the artist’s intentions and unconscious mind” (p. 5). Sills offers suggestions on how to look at photographs: “How do you feel when you look at this photograph?” “Is the photographer trying to educate her audience, portray beauty, make us laugh?” and so on. The biographies of Cunningham, Lange, and Bravo are a little more detailed than those of Weems, Dorman, and Sherman, whose profiles focus mostly on their work, rather than their work and personal lives. The reproductions of the black and white photographs are crisp and clear. Sills includes just enough photographs to introduce the reader to the photographer’s style and subject matter. Information at the back of the book includes the basic make-up of a camera and a bibliography for further reading.

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A 6+ FI Reviewed by Lanell Rabner

Sarah Ruth Heart comes from Heart Colony, a small, tight-knit Southern Mennonite community where the cruelty of leader Hezekiel Whittenstone overshadows a once joyful, simple lifestyle. Hezekiel has forbidden education and closed down the school. He has no patience for laughter or fun, only work, from sun-up to sundown. Sarah Ruth is the school’s spelling champion, and all she wants is to compete in the countywide spelling bee, a dream that is no longer possible. However, Sarah Ruth’s world is about to turn upside down. First, Aunt Lila, Hezekiel’s wife leaves the colony and moves to SlapEasy, something no one has ever done before. Then both the community and her children publicly shun her. Next Joshua, the love of Sarah Ruth’s life, also leaves, after being severely beaten by Hezekiel. Finally, Sarah musters the courage to defy Hezekiel and decides to go to the spelling bee on her own. Her decision affects more than just Sarah Ruth herself. It affects her entire family and their standing in Heart Colony.

Escape from Heart is a story about individualism and courage to stand up for what’s right, even when it means losing what you love. Sarah Ruth is truly heroic in her ability to take control of her future and then to live with the consequences of her decisions.

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* 4-6 FI Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Shah Bahram of Persia is very wealthy, but unhappy. One day he discovers a door in his palace that he has never noticed before. The door leads to an elaborately decorated room where Bahram sees portraits of seven beautiful princesses on the wall, each labeled with the woman’s name and homeland. He notices that his name is associated with each woman. Although Bahram orders the room to be locked, he cannot stop thinking about the princesses. At the suggestion of the grand vizier, Bahram builds seven pavilions, each in a different color and each protected by one of the seven heavenly planets (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, the moon, and sun). He invites the princesses to visit his kingdom, allowing each to choose the pavilion in which she’d like to live. Each princess tells Shah Bahram a tale of adventure and miracles that also teaches him one of the seven virtues of patience, love, perseverance, wisdom, forgiveness, truth, and humility.

The Seven Wise Princesses is based on Haft Paykar, a twelfth-century poem by the Persian...
The underlying theme of the stories is that one must perfect oneself as a preparation to meet God. Tarnowska’s stories are unusual, interesting, and full of reference to Sufi teachings. Mistry’s stunning illustrations use deep, rich colors and fine detail. He has framed the text of each story with columns and the floral and geometric designs common to Islamic visual arts. The illustrations for each story center on one main color; for example, the Moroccan princess lives in the blue pavilion, so the predominant color for these illustrations is blue. Tarnowska’s notes at the end of the book explain the number, color, and nature symbols used throughout the text and how they relate to Sufism. This is a unique and very interesting collection of stories.

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Reviewed by Chris Crowe

The Land, Taylor’s first novel since The Well (1995), is the book Taylor fans have long awaited—the prequel to all of the stories about the Logan family made famous in Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (1976). Set in the decades immediately after the Civil War, the novel is narrated by Paul Edward Logan, son of Edward Logan, a white plantation owner in Georgia and one of his slave women, Deborah. After being raised in a loving, secure environment, Paul Edward learns that his comfortable position with his white father cannot last. Though he loves his father and his white brothers, circumstances force him to run away from his family and, with his good friend Mitchell Thomas, strike out on his own. He eventually ends up in Mississippi where, after much struggle, he manages to buy land, the same land that, within two generations, will provide a home for Cassie Logan and her family.

Told in a remarkably rich, sincere style, this is Taylor’s best novel yet. The same family values and themes that dominate Taylor’s other novels dominate this one. After reading Paul Edward’s story, it’s easy to see why the future Logans act and believe as they do. As she does in her other stories, Taylor shows racism in all its painful and ugly variations, but the ugliness is balanced by love, friendship, loyalty, and compassion. Paul Edward and the other victims of racism in the novel remain noble and likeable despite the many struggles they endure. The Land will inspire its readers.

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Reviewed by Jan Staheli

The Rumpelstiltskin Problem is a collection of variations on a theme: the story of the miller who says his daughter can spin gold from straw, and the little man who saves the girl’s bacon. These stories are more than just your regulation, fractured fairy tales. This is an effort by the author to make sense of the nonsensical details of the story as we know it. As Vande Velde says in her Author’s Note, “No matter the reason the miller said what he did, you’d think that in reality he would have noticed that his daughter doesn’t actually know how to spin straw into gold. . . But still he brings her to the castle to show off a talent he knows she doesn’t have—which doesn’t sound like responsible parenting.”

This is indeed indicative of the six stories that follow. Vande Velde’s sharp wit and drive to tell a story—a real story—has produced six widely varied and unfailingly interesting tales about the miller, his daughter, a king, and a little man who calls himself Rumpelstiltskin. There is the little man looking for a tender tidbit for dinner and the handsome elf who clearly cares more for the beautiful daughter than the king. There is the Russian domovoi, or house elf who only wants his people to be happy, and the father who brags about his daughter unwisely but rescues her in the end. In another version, a poor woman (named Rumpelstiltskin) is so ugly that she has no friends, but she longs for a baby to care for and love. My favorite, however, is the last story, about a king who is so kind that when a pushy young miller’s daughter attaches herself to him, thinking to trick him into marriage, he must resort to a trick of his own to save the day.
I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves a good story, be it fairy tale or not.


B 6-12 NF Reviewed by Sharon Kuttler

A cosmology is a picture of the universe unique to a culture. Zeitlin retells creation stories and cosmologies from a wide range of both ancient and modern cultures and religions. He also describes current scientific theories regarding the universe, such as Einstein’s special theory of relativity. More than a dozen cultures, including Greek, Maori, Norse, Chinese, Hebrew, and Iroquois, are represented. A brief background of the culture precedes its cosmologies and myths.

This book should prove useful in the classroom for the study of creation stories from different cultures. Zeitlin provides extensive source notes and suggestions for further reading. His stories are thoroughly researched and well written. Raschka based his black and white illustrations on actual designs or artifacts indigenous to the groups of people written about. It is disturbing that religion, science, and mythology are intermingled and seemingly regarded equally. In the introduction, the author states, “For the purpose of this book, we believe in all Gods.” The ancient Greek myths are given as much credence as writings in Genesis and the Big Bang Theory. A detailed table of contents does not fully compensate for the lack of an index.

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A B-PreS PB Reviewed by Marsha D. Broadway

Felix eats too much chocolate, stays up too late, and wakes up with a tummy ache. Mama makes chamomile tea for Felix, gives him sugared prunes, and bundles him up for some fresh air; but Felix doesn’t feel better. Mama calls Doctor Duck, and off they go for an appointment. Felix is afraid the doctor will ask Mama to leave the room, but she stays as Felix is examined. Doctor Duck gives him “two spoonful of Happy Tummy,” and by the next morning Felix is better and ready to go to the circus, movies, and funhouse.

Guinea pig Felix joins Wells’ Max, Ruby, Timothy, Yoko, and Edward the Unready as another furry child with human characteristics and concerns. Again, Wells has captured the perfect expressions on the faces of her characters—a loving, comforting mother; a bewildered, sick toddler; and a friendly family doctor. Watercolor and ink illustrations and the text are set inside bold, bright borders. The small volume is an ideal choice for snuggle-up lap reading or to allay a toddler’s fear about visiting the doctor.