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Book Reviews

Authors
Vicky M. Turner, Doorly Mora, Donna Cardon, Irene Halliday, Laura Wadley, Rita Christensen, Cinda Clement, Tom Wright, Nancy Evensen, Devi Chitrapu, Carla Morris, Sharon Kuttler, Mary Chapman, Janet O. Francis, AnnMarie Hamar, and Jan Staheli

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Reviewed by Vicky Turner

Little Gorilla walks through the jungle watching Mama Elephant, Mama Snake, and Mama Lizard hug their babies. It seems that every mama is hugging her children. Little Gorilla gets sadder and sadder until Mama Elephant takes her to get just the right hug.

Great pictures and a simple, one-word story makes this a favorite with readers, nearly readers, and everyone who just wants a hug.


Reviewed by Jan Staheli

Hallie and David think it would be fun to have a cow. A cow would bring milk, cheese, and ice cream, besides giving them something to do. Their cow, Cassie, arrives but brings no milk. Hallie and David try everything they can think of to get Cassie to give milk and finally discover that playing the radio in the barn works. All is well until Cassie hears Beethoven’s sixth symphony, the Pastoral Symphony. Cassie struggles to explain how happy the song makes her and what she feels inside. This is the birth of Cassie’s grand passion—Beethoven. She wants to hear it, live it, play it—has to play it. This creates a problem, as Cassie has hooves, not fingers. Cassie’s initial infatuation with Beethoven’s music quickly turns to passion, and then obsession. She becomes demanding, giving Hallie and David the ride of their lives.

Arkin’s fable about music and musicians is engaging and illuminating. This is a unique book with characters that are both serious and funny.

Arkin’s passages on music are lyrical and enlightening. Cassie’s journey takes her from the astonishment of first encounter to the joy and peace of loving music.

This is a wonderful book for an adult to share with a child, just as one might want to share Beethoven’s music.


Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

*Footnotes* is an eye-opening look at what it takes to be a classical ballet dancer. Augustyn discusses seven classical ballets, including *The Nutcracker, The Sleeping Beauty,* and *Swan Lake.* Unlike many children’s books on ballet, Augustyn offers his readers the dancer’s point of view on everything from costuming to the challenges of partnering. He devotes a chapter to each of the seven ballets. Instead of making each chapter a mere synopsis of the piece, Augustyn uses them as a springboard for discussing many aspects of dance. He covers issues such as dance notation, the role of the orchestra conductor, and the physical and mental toll ballet takes on its dancers. He explains how Edward Villella, Rudolf Nureyev, and Mikhail Baryshnikov have changed the role of male dancers. Darcey Bussell, Paloma Herrara, and others discuss how they prepare for some of the most famous and demanding roles in classical ballet. Augustyn also presents a brief history of ballet, which had its beginnings in the French court of King Louis XIV.

The dancers quoted in the book are very candid as they discuss the joys, disappointments, and physical pain associated with their art. What comes through in the text is that despite long hours and a lot of physical therapy, the dancers love what they are doing. Augustyn’s expertise
comes from the years he spent as a principal dancer with the National Ballet of Canada. Overall, his book is well written and balanced in its presentation. He doesn't glamorize the life of a dancer or try to discourage, but he does make the point that dancers work hard. Interesting facts and humorous anecdotes are scattered throughout the text. The book's illustrations are color photographs of dancers both on and off stage, in performance and in rehearsal. Adults and children who are keen on ballet will enjoy this book.


**A 3-7 FI Reviewed by Janet Francis**

Howie, living in Brooklyn during the 1940's, seems to feel that the fact that there is a war going on should explain and excuse a lot—especially the schemes he and his friend Danny concoct. Details of the boys' daily activities, such as collecting scrap and using ration stamps, combine with Avi's use of actual newspaper headlines from that time period to give the reader a very good feel for their world. The occasionally described nightmares give the reader a glimpse of the long-range effects of the war treated so jauntily in the boys' daytime life. Poignant and hard-boiled, these are real Brooklyn kids whose story creates a vignette of a time worth remembering.

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**B 3-5 FI Reviewed by Mary Chapman**

Benny is the loveable, imaginative dog belonging to the Bensky family, who live in a small Canadian town. He is the companion—and sometimes babysitter—of the Bensky daughter, Rosie, and her friend Fran. It's finally summer, and Benny is looking forward to fun with Rosie and Fran now that school is out. However, there is no summer holiday in store for Benny; for Mr. Bensky, hoping that Benny will get rid of some of his bad habits, like chewing the corners of the cushions and digging up houseplants, has enrolled him in Ms. Viola Pin's obedience school. Poor Benny is disappointed about nature are the way they are, such as why coyotes have short ears and why peaches are sweet and bees fly. Bierhorst's narrative retains the feel of the oral storyteller by prefacing each story with an exchange between speaker and listener. The stories are short, two to three pages long, and perfect for reading out loud. Watson's animals inhabit a southwestern desert landscape and wear traditional southwestern Indian garb. The acknowledgments section lists several sources for further adult reading.
missing out on the summer fun and not at all thrilled about being under the instruction of mean, bitter Viola Pin. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Bensky are having problems of their own. No one is eating at their once popular Perogy Palace, a restaurant that serves perogies—soft dumplings usually filled with cheese and potatoes. The Benskys can’t figure out what has made the perogies taste bad until Benny, along with Rosie and Fran, stumble onto the solution and become local heroes.

This story will appeal to young readers, who should be able to relate to the pleasures and problems of Rosie, Fran, and even Benny. Borsky reveals Benny’s imagination, giving the reader an idea of what may go through a dog’s mind when he digs up a plant or licks melted ice cream off the sidewalk. This is a humorous story, and the relationship between humans and their pets is charmingly depicted. Also, a recipe for perogies is included at the end of the book.


Bortz discusses cosmic collisions and near-collisions, including the probable asteroid impact sixty-five million years ago that destroyed three-fourths of all species on earth; the 1994 crash of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 into Jupiter; and the Tunguska event of 1908 in Siberia. The last two chapters explain “near Earth objects” (NEOs) and how one might protect oneself from a future devastating collision with an asteroid or comet.

Bortz writes with clarity and enthusiasm. Photographs, computer-enhanced images, and paintings augment the interesting text. The dramatic cover of an asteroid streaking toward Earth and a dinosaur attracts even reluctant readers, and the fascinating text holds their attention. The author relates the intriguing stories of scientists and their discoveries, not just the bare facts. A list of other resources, including web sites, and a thorough index aids

student researchers. This is an excellent book on a high-interest subject.


Brynie’s series about the human body, 101 Questions About Blood and Circulation answers questions about the circulation system asked by high school students. Topics discussed include the operation of the heart, palpitations, heart attacks, components of blood, the immune system, use of leeches, heart transplants, and how to keep one’s heart healthy.

The question-and-answer format captures the reader’s attention. The illustrations, though sparse and rudimentary, clarify Brynie’s explanations of complex processes. A few black and white but no color photographs are included. The strength of this book is in its text. Intriguing facts abound. For example, if the arteries, veins, and capillaries inside a human were placed end to end, they would stretch for over 60,000 miles, a distance equivalent to two and a half times the circumference of the world at its equator. Tables, notes, a glossary, a list of organizations and websites, and an index help make this well-organized book useful to student researchers, yet the topics are intriguing enough for leisure browsing. The author has written books with a similar format about the brain, skin, and immune system.


Until the 1920’s, most astronomers believed our galaxy was the entire universe. It is
now known that there are billions of galaxies in the universe. Our understanding of the cosmos is constantly expanding thanks to space probes and increasingly powerful and diverse telescopes. *The Atlas of Space* is an up-to-date, comprehensive guide to space. Topics include the history of space, our solar system, deep space, and space exploration.

Clear, accessible writing about the history, physics, current theories, and new discoveries in astronomy make this book a valuable resource for science teachers, students, and others who require current and fundamental information. Each page is adorned with many colorful photographs, maps, and illustrations, including recent photographs from the Hubble Space Telescope and space probes. The contents page, timeline, glossary, and index prove useful to student researchers; this is an excellent choice for libraries and will replace out-of-date texts.


Reviewed by Carla Morris

Mr. Keene, the principal of a “fine, fine school,” is in love with the learning process and loves to walk up and down the halls of his school, watching children learn shapes, colors, numbers, and letters. He suggests that because it is such as fine, fine school, the children should come on Saturdays. Then he suggests that they come on Sundays, all holidays, and even during the summer.

It is Tillie who points out that not everyone is learning—dogs are not learning to jump over creeks, and children are not learning to climb trees. There are many things to learn, things not always taught in school.

This book has many repeating phrases. It would make a great read-aloud for classroom study and discussion, and teaches the importance of balance in all things. The illustrations hold lots of hidden treasures.

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Reviewed by Devi Chitrapu

This is a story about the world when it was young. The young world, particularly the parts that lie between the Mountains of Mist and the Singular Sea, is very noisy. The forests and fields are filled with the roars and hoots of animals such as hyenas, lions, and elephants; the earth shakes under the thundering hooves of wild beasts. Even the smallest creatures, like butterflies, contribute to the overall noise. The butterflies constantly argue among themselves, making a loud and most annoying sound with their squeaky voices. The din and bustle continue until, one day, a storm makes so much noise that the whole world trembles. The butterflies are tossed into the mud, and for several minutes, nothing stirs. In the quiet following the storm, the butterflies realize that they are all different colors. Pleased with the transformation that the storm has brought about, they stop bragging and making noise. All the animals enjoy the beauty of rainbow colors and the peace of silence.

*Why Butterflies go by on Silent Wings* is an interesting, thought-provoking book for children who are curious about the why and how of things. Roth, who has illustrated several children’s books, makes the story more interesting with his vibrant, animated pictures.

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Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

In their introduction, Denenberg and Roscoe challenge readers to name fifty people whom they view as heroes. The one requirement all fifty must meet is that “all must have made an exceptional positive contribution to our world.” Denenberg and Roscoe’s own list consists of
doctors, inventors, teachers, conservationists, and politicians, among others. Many of their subjects are well known, but some might not be as familiar to young readers. Each hero is introduced in a double-page spread that includes information on the person's most famous accomplishments, a "Power Word" quote, the title of a book for further reading, and photographs. The authors also include website addresses and snail mail addresses of organizations that readers can contact for further information.

50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet is not intended to be a biography; rather it is intended to be used as a springboard that leads children to learn more about the book's subjects. It also encourages young readers to turn away from idolizing only athletes and pop-stars and learn more about people who have really made a difference in the world. Denenberg and Roscoe present a racially and ethnically diverse group of heroes. Some of the heroes they discuss are George Washington, Ben Franklin, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Tecumseh, labor activist Dolores Huerta, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. The authors encourage readers to find a way to make a difference in their community, offering suggestions as to how they can do this. Overall, this is an exceptional reference work.


* 4-6 FI Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

Dovey Coe takes this opportunity to set the record straight. She might have hated Parnell Caraway, but she didn't kill him. Dovey has been accused of his murder and shares the happenings of the summer before his death. Dovey is an outspoken twelve-year-old whom the reader immediately champions. She consistently sticks up for her older brother, Amos, who is deaf and is belittled by most of the town. Amos and Dovey love to hunt and climb the mountains collecting healing herbs. Their beautiful sister Caroline allows Parnell to court her throughout the summer. Parnell's father is the richest man in town; in fact, he owns most of the town. Consequently, Parnell is arrogant, mean, and vain, especially behind Caroline's back. Dovey describes him as "Seventeen years old and rotten to the core." Caroline is the only thing Parnell wants that he can't have. When Caroline rejects his marriage proposal in favor of schooling, Parnell's anger turns toward Dovey. Dovey is lured into the Caraway's closed store to face an enraged, drunken Parnell holding Amos' beloved dog hostage. Dovey protects the dog, and in doing so, injures Parnell. When she awakens, Parnell and the dog are dead beside her. Dovey is assigned a young, inexperienced district attorney for defense. She quickly realizes she must solve the murder herself or face imprisonment.

Dovey's southern dialect is authentic for the North Carolina, 1928 mountain-town setting. It provides a fun read. Her spunky, yet devoted, character charms the reader. The character development is excellent, and the description of mountain-town life is intriguing. The book is a hard one to put down. Dovey Coe is definitely worth an exceptional rating.


B 3-6 FI Reviewed by Sharon Kuttler

Mr. Mack sends his sons to their rooms without supper for breaking a window. Gigglers, small, furry creatures that change color to match whatever they are near, overhear Mr. Mack. For thousands of years, gigglers have been giving "the treatment" to men and women who are mean to children. The giggler treatment is poo on the shoe. Mr. Mack's children continually rescue him from stepping on fresh dog poo, provided by Rover, the millionaire dog who is amply paid by the gigglers for his commodity. This humorous, easy-to-read book will appeal to Roald Dahl fans, but be prepared for references to dog poo and bodily functions. The abundant pencil illustrations are amusing and enhance the story considerably. A glossary
explains the British slang used in the story. The last chapter has a list of messages from the story, including "not all dogs are millionaires, only the ones that poo a lot." This book is clever, but also crude.


A PreS P PB Reviewed by Vicky Turner

Humpty Dumpty is having a "bad-hair day" or rather a "cracked-shell day" as he goes from one calamity to another. All the King's horses, Queen's sons (and daughter), and knights in rusty armor and waterlogged tights can't help him. Only a small child who loves him is able to keep Humpty safe and sound.

Nicely done watercolor pictures add to the humor of this version of the old nursery rhyme.


A- 7-9 FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

Nina Lewis is always on the move. She and her mother, Joyce, live in their van between stops in Toronto, Alaska, Vermont, Utah, California, and New York. Nina has never stayed in one place long enough to make friends or attachments. Truly, she can't say she is from anywhere. Now in eighth grade, Nina would like some stability—friends to share things with, and boys to date—but her mother will allow none of these things. Any new attention to Nina might result in a move after only weeks in a new town.

Brought up in this pattern of moving, Nina has been an obedient child. However, as a budding young woman, she can't understand her mother's erratic behavior. Junior high activities, parties, and sports beckon to her, and every move becomes more heart-wrenching than the one before.

Ehrlich tells this story through the innocent yet bewildered voice of a young girl. Nina grows increasingly distressed as any hope of human attachment beyond her mother's company vanishes time and again. The story begins as Nina describes a tight bond between mother and child. As the story picks up pace, this bond fractures; Nina has too many unanswered questions about her mother's past, their nomadic lifestyle, and her own invisible roots. This page-turner is dramatic and tragic as the unexpected changes Nina's life irrevocably. This is a well-crafted story that makes sense when all is known.

Local interest is generated by a chapter set in Logan, Utah. A smattering of expletives make this more appropriate for the older reader.


B PreS-2 PB Reviewed by Cinda Clement

Iris is unhappy when her family moves from the city to the country. She misses all the familiar sights, sounds, and activities of the city. Her parents try to cheer her up, but it is her grandfather who finally listens to her and finds her a friend who introduces her to the wonders of the country. Iris still dreams of the city, but also enjoys her new friend and country life.

The illustrations are fanciful and delightful. The story is simply told with a good lesson about change and new experiences.


B PreS-1 FI Reviewed by Rita Christensen

*My Dolly* is an adorable picture book about a child and her doll and all the fun they have playing together. Radunshky's illustrations use many mediums—paper, paint, fabric, photographs, and pencil—in collage format to
compose a funky and festive accompaniment to Guthrie’s creative lyrics.

Those familiar with Guthrie’s songwriting know that he penned many intimate and playful songs for his children after World War II. The words and music to *My Dolly* are classic Guthrie—positive, amusing, upbeat, and rhythmic. While singing the words, the pictures come to life. Those not able to read music may find the text unusual and awkward (the chorus is repeated, etc.). In addition, the sheet music is printed on the reverse side of the dust jacket, which may pose a problem for libraries that permanently attach the jacket to the book.


A 6+ FI Reviewed by Nancy C. Evensen

What would it be like to have a birthday and become younger rather than older? *Turnabout* begins when one hundred-year-old Amelia Hazelwood is asked, “Do you want to be younger?” This idea appeals to Amelia, who is losing many of her basic skills. A revolutionary drug, Project Turnabout, has been discovered which reverses the aging process, allowing those who take it to grow progressively younger. Of course, residents of rest homes who are in stretchers or wheelchairs, or using walkers, eagerly sign the release form to have the drug administered. They are told that another drug can stop the unaging process; persons can remain at their desired age. Trouble arises, however, when everyone who is given the second drug dies. As Melly (Amelia) has her sixteenth birthday, she wonders what will happen to her and Anny Beth as they continue to unage. Who will care for them as they become children and then infants? Looking to the twenty-first century, Melly and Anny Beth attempt to solve their dilemma.

The fountain of youth topic has always been an interesting one. Asking whether or not a reverse-aging drug should and would be taken by individual students could set up an absorbing debate in a school classroom. Speculation on world conditions in 2085 could also spark a fascinating conversation.


A 2-7 FI Reviewed by Cinda Clement

This book presents a boy’s view of America in the 1930s, coupled with a Jewish boy’s view of prewar Germany. Tony runs away from home and travels the rails across America during the Great Depression, while David, in Berlin, attends the Olympics and escapes to America with relatives before Hitler begins the annihilation of Jews. The two boys meet in California by the book’s end.

This book is the newest in *The Century Kids*, a ten-volume series that follows a number of families whose lives intertwine in twentieth-century America. Each book portrays one decade and tries to give the reader a historical perspective on the period. This book is very educational and quite readable, a painless way to learn a bit of history. The story is engaging and well written.


A 4-6 FI Reviewed by Laura Wadley

The Wilkinsonsons, a family of ghosts, are forced to haunt a knickers (underwear) shop until they encounter Dial-a-Ghost, an agency created to provide homeless haunts with suitable accommodations. At the same time that the Wilkinsonsons are scheduled to begin inhabiting a convent, the agency finally finds a home for the Screamers, a truly unsavory pair of spooks, at Helton Hall. Poor little Oliver Smith, the surprised heir of Helton Hall, is under the care of his creepy guardians, the Snodde-Brittles, who are taking in the Screamers in order to scare Oliver and thus gain ownership of Helton.
Fortunately, Dial-a-Ghost messes up, sending the loving Wilkinson family to a grateful Oliver, while the Screamers end up in the nunnery. Much hilarious mayhem follows until everything is straightened out to the advantage of the pleasant protagonists.

Dial-a-Ghost is lots of fun. Its silly gruesomeness is just right for middle grade kids. It has a happy ending and would make a good read-aloud. Also suitable for adults.


A 6 PB Reviewed by Devi Chitrapu

First written and published in 1819, Rip Van Winkle continues to entertain and enthrall readers today. The fantasy story of a man, who under the influence of some strange looking people and their beverage sleeps for twenty years, has successfully maintained its popularity.

Rip Van Winkle takes place in a little village of great antiquity lying at the foot of the Catskill Mountains near the Hudson River. Rip Van Winkle, an obedient, hen-pecked husband, is a simple, good-natured man and kind neighbor. Though he dreads his termagant wife, he is a favorite among all the good wives of the village. He has a large following of happy children, whom he teaches to fly kites and shoot marbles. Rip Van Winkle does not favor profitable labor and cannot take his wife’s clamor, so in despair, he takes refuge in the woods with his gun and his dog. In the woods he meets some curious-looking men. They offer him a taste of their beverage, which makes him fall into a deep sleep. He awakes twenty years later to find a changed world. Rip Van Winkle finds his dog missing, his gun rusty, his bones old and tired, and his beard grown a foot long. While nobody recognizes the old, bearded Rip Van Winkle in tattered clothes, many mistake him for a Federal, a democrat, a Tory, a spy and a refugee, until at last an old woman identifies him. Learning of the death of his wife and friends, Winkle is heartbroken, but he soon finds a warm place in the heart and home of his daughter. Winkle restores his regular track of gossip, makes friends among the rising generation, and tells his story to every stranger who comes to Mr. Doo Little’s hotel.

Rackham’s decorative illustrations make this quintessential American classic much more interesting. The thirty-four exquisite paintings in this deluxe gift edition prove that a picture really is worth a thousand words. They complement Irving’s descriptions and leave out no detail. Readers who like the endearing personality of Rip Van Winkle will enjoy this edition.


B PreS+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Kellogg has added some interesting twists—dogsleds, baseball, and even dinosaurs—to this old favorite. Great pictures accompany the story, which can be read or sung, and music for the song is included.


A 3-6 PB NF Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Lacy introduces her readers to some of the world’s most famous artists by offering simple step-by-step projects they can do to familiarize themselves with techniques and styles used by these artists. Her book is divided into chapters that focus on one genre or style, such as landscape painting and still life. Each chapter covers works by artists like Van Gogh, Monet, Cézanne, Renoir, and Michelangelo. Lacy briefly introduces an artist and one of his or her paintings or sculptures, then suggests an activity that incorporates a technique used in that work of art. For example, for Paul Gauguin’s painting, Matamoe 1892, Lacey gives instruction on how to do an abstract collage using cardboard, paper,
glue, and paint. For Georges Seurat’s painting, *Porten-Bessin 1882*, her suggested activity focuses on pointillism. Other projects include making an African mask and creating a mosaic out of dried peas, lentils, and popcorn kernels.

Lacey encourages children to become involved in art. She introduces them to movements like cubism; discusses how artists use shape, movement, and color; and explains how different media—oil paints, charcoal, etc.—produce different effects. Her step-by-step activities are explained clearly, but are not so confining as to limit creativity. Most are relatively easy. Scattered throughout the text are tips on how to draw people and animals, manipulate the horizon line to suggest distance, and organize a still life. A glossary is included at the back of the book.

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* 10+ NF BI Reviewed by Irene Halliday

During a five-year occupation by Nazi Germany, Danish resistance slowly and steadily increased until the Nazi’s were forced to declare a state of emergency in the summer of 1943 and place Denmark under martial law. A month later, in a planned, surprise roundup, all Danish Jews were to be arrested and transported to concentration camps. After 10:00 p.m. on October first, telephone lines were shut down, and scores of soldiers, with the addresses of Jewish residents in hand, began the roundup. By morning, the enraged Nazis realized that nearly ninety-five percent of Denmark’s Jews had evaded capture. It was the “first and only time in Nazi Germany’s brief history, [that] a large-scale attack on the Jews failed.” How had this happened?

To answer this question, Levine interviewed dozens of people who took part in the events of that evening. She intersperses the stories of twenty-one people in her exciting narrative, personalizing this historic event and inviting emotional involvement with real people.

A “who’s who” listing of names accompanied by photographs helps readers identify those whose stories are told; and a bibliography, numerous photographs, index, and selected chronology further enhance the text.

Though Levine’s account is generally positive, she does not omit accounts of failed rescue attempts. Realities of life in concentration camps, particularly Theresienstadt, are sensitively, yet honestly presented. *Darkness over Denmark* is not only an outstanding achievement in historical writing for young people, but a compelling celebration of that which is best in humanity.

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A- PreS-2 PB Reviewed by Cinda Clement

This edition of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, is a picture book. The story line is the same as the original, minus most of the beautiful language. The illustrations are wonderful. They portray open-faced children in delight, the cold queen, interesting scenery from the story, and the large, loving lion. They depict images conjured by Lewis’s words. The pictures make this book worth looking at. Perhaps the best way to enjoy it is to have the original story in one hand and this picture book in the other. For very little children, the picture book serves as an introduction to Lewis.

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A 1-4 PB Reviewed by Devi Chitrakul

*Freedom School, Yes!* is based on factual events that happened during the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project. Littlesugar’s interviews with three of the 600 courageous
young volunteers who risked their lives to get African-Americans the civil rights they were denied form the basis of this tale. The book is a story of the courage of both the young volunteers and the brave African-American families who hosted them. The volunteers lived with families and taught in Freedom Schools. The students, consisting of both young and old, not only obtained their right to vote, but also learned of their rich heritage.

Jolie, a young student attending the Freedom School, is scared to have her school teacher, nineteen-year-old Annie, live in her house. Her mother, however, is brave and wants to free herself and her children from fear and bondage. She, like everyone else in the community, perceives the Freedom School as a beacon of light that will lead them to know who they are and how rich their heritage is. According to her, knowledge is the only weapon that can drive the fear out of their hearts and make them liberated. This determination helps Jolie’s mother ignore the attacks on her house and the church, just as Annie’s desire to educate and fight for the rights of the African-Americans helps her ignore the threats to her life.

Freedom School, Yes! is a true story of courage that teaches readers some of the history, struggles, and suffering African-Americans went through. The historical story becomes authentic because it includes interviews with people actually involved in the struggle. Cooper brings the characters to life, adding meaning to the story. His sensitive character portraits, while being delightful, recreate history and make the book much more interesting.


B 4-6 FI Reviewed by Jan Staheli

It is the week of Valentines in Hamlet, Vermont, and Miss Earth, a well-loved teacher, is still trying to recover from the death of her dear Rocco Tortoni. When Fawn Petros receives an ugly red vase from Greece containing four young cupids who have been asleep since the time of Alexander the Great, the students see a way to celebrate Valentine’s Day and solve Miss Earth’s problem all at the same time. Poor Miss Earth falls in love with an odd assortment of people—and things—before her students are through.

While Miss Earth deals with her love life, Fawn struggles with her own self-image. She is shy and feels overwhelmed at school. The other students think she is stupid, although she is pretty sure she is neither stupid nor dumb. Dealing with all the problems the cupids cause forces her to begin thinking new, positive things about herself.

This is a funny little Valentine’s story. The fourth in a series about the children of Hamlet, it assumes the reader is already acquainted with the characters and situations of the previous books. Readers familiar with this series will enjoy this Valentine adventure.


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C 10-12 FI Reviewed by Janet Francis

An embattled group of five teenagers fight their way through an Australia occupied by an unnamed enemy. They destroy as they go—their self-assumed mission is to devastate all military aspects of the country in preparation for the bombing directed by backup adults in New Zealand.

A magnet for violent-encounter-loving adolescents, the book consists of a small amount of character delineation, a sure-shot plot, and one hold-your-breath encounter after another. *Burning for Revenge* will likely be popular, and the whole series may be in demand.


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A 4-8 PB PT Reviewed by Donna Cardon

Attention bug-lovers everywhere! McKelvey has created the creepy-critter poetry book for you. Each of the twenty-six short and pithy poems highlights a different multilegged friend. The poems are full of alliterations, rhythm, and puns. Storytellers may want to practice these tongue-twisting rhymes before reading them out loud. Clever typography and illustrations by Caldecott-winning illustrator Egielski enhance each of the poems. Most of the illustrations are full-page and are done with bold colors. Kids love the slightly creepy images like that of the “lousy louses,” who have made their “impromptu houses” in the little boy’s hair, and the “roaches [that] roam among the dishes.” This book is certainly not for the bug-phobe, but insect enamored children—and grown-ups—will love it.

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* 3-6 PB NF Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Mary Verdi-Fletcher has always wanted to be a dancer, but because she has spina bifida and is confined to a wheelchair, she is told she will never attain her dream. Refusing to listen to dance teachers who told her that dancing in a wheelchair is not real dancing, Verdi-Flethcer begins to enter, and win, dance contests. In the 1980s, Verdi-Fletcher founded Dancing Wheels, a company associated with the Cleveland/San Jose Ballet. Under the supervision of artistic co-director and choreographer Sabatino Verlezza, Dancing Wheels offers workshops and performance opportunities for disabled children (“sit-down” dancers) as well as those without disabilities (“stand-up” dancers). Verlezza, his wife Barbara, and Verdi-Fletcher help the dancers focus on what they can do, not what they can’t do. In realizing her dream, Verdi-Fletcher has helped others with physical disabilities achieve their own dreams as well.

This book demonstrates that there are no limits on artistic expression. It also depicts a different aspect of dance and the creativity and self-confidence it fosters. The text and color photographs take the reader to dance classes, rehearsals, and performances. The book is positive in its outlook and encouraging as it showcases an extraordinary group of people. It’s highly recommended.

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B 5+ FI Reviewed by Donna Cardon

*Parsifal’s Page* is the fourth of Morris’s rollicking retellings of Arthurian Tales. Parsifal is an ignorant rustic who, after meeting Sir Gawain, decides to become a knight. Parsifal learns courtly manners from a foppish king and combat skills from Sir Lancelot, and, once finished with his training, becomes the very
picture of a perfect knight. Parsifal proceeds to save and then marry a damsel in distress. Unready to settle down, he leaves his new wife in search of “great deeds.” Parsifal soon finds the Fisher King, who is afflicted by a mysterious curse. He watches in silence as a bloody lance pierces the king, and the king then drinks from the Holy Grail. Parsifal doesn’t know how to help the Fisher King and feels he has failed. Disillusioned, he goes in search of a cure for the king. Aided by Sir Gawain and beings from the Fairy World, Parsifal gradually comes to understand the difference between looking like a knight and being one. Once he understands this, Parsifal learns how to save the Fisher King and lives happily ever after with his beautiful wife.

_Parsifal’s Page_ is not quite as fun as the previous book in this series, _The Savage Damsel and the Dwarf_. Many elements of the story are too much like the past books. Parsifal is not as likeable as Morris’s earlier main characters: Lynet, Gareth, and Gawain. Morris based his story on _Parzival_, by Wolfrom Von Eschenbackm, in which the Holy Grail is a central theme. However, in Morris’s tale the importance of the Holy Grail is obscure at best. Despite these shortcomings, there is enough jousting, love, and magic to engage any Arthurian fan.

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B K-2 PB Reviewed by Cinda Clement

Ikarus Jackson has wings that he uses to fly. The children at school make fun of him, just as they make fun of the narrator for being so quiet. The narrator, a young girl, follows Ikarus and watches everyone harass and tease him. She finally has the courage to say, “Your flying is beautiful!” and points out his beauty to others.

In this story, Myers invites readers to accept the individuality of others and celebrate their differences. The illustrations are bold, bright, and different, but they portray the feeling of the work. Children can learn from and enjoy this book.

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B 3+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Katya’s grandmother gives her a magic nesting doll, but warns her to use it only three times, after which the magic will be gone. On the day of her grandmother’s funeral, Katya leaves with her doll to find her place in the world. As she travels, the world grows darker and colder. Finally, an innkeeper tells her that if she sleeps she will never wake up because the prince, Tsarevitch, has fallen “under a wicked spell that turned him into living ice,” making it always “winter without thaw, night without moon, and dark without dawn.”

Katya becomes curious about Tsarevitch and decides to see him. Once she has seen him, she feels sorry for him and vows to break the spell that binds him. With the help of her magic nesting doll, a bear, a wolf, and a firebird, Tsarevitch is nearly returned to life. Disappointed, Katrina turns to go, but then leans down and kisses him, realizing that she loves him. The kiss brings the man back to life. Tsarevitch marries Katrina and they live happily-ever-after, as do the bears, wolves, and firebirds, for Tsarevitch has forbidden everyone to hunt them.

The story and gorgeous enamel-type pictures hold the imagination and interest of older children. An author’s note at the beginning of the book explains a little of the history of nesting dolls and the fine art it has become in Russia.

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* PreK-2 FI PB Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar
Whiteblack the Penguin is the chief storyteller of Penguinland's radio station, WONS. However, Whiteblack has run out of stories to tell and so decides to take a vacation, because "travelers always have lots of stories." His trip turns out to be much more exciting than he anticipated. Whiteblack's boat hits an iceberg; he finds himself being shot out of a cannon; and as his journey wears on, Whiteblack helps two baby ostriches hatch, crosses a desert on camel-back and a homemade scooter, and finally falls out of an airplane and lands in a fishing net. When Whiteback returns to Penguinland, he not only has plenty of stories to tell, he's treated as a hero by all his friends.

The Reys' story is clever and amusing. Whiteblack is a charming character with a great sense of curiosity and a love of adventure. As always, H.A. Rey's illustrations, in watercolor and pencil, have a simple quality that is very appealing. The story of Whiteblack was originally written in 1937 while the Reys were living in Paris. The story and its illustrations were discovered in a box of unpublished works after Margret's death in 1996. A three-page publisher's note at the end of the book explains how the manuscript was discovered and offers a short biography of the Reys.


A 4-6 FI Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

Because their father is missing, Amy Kate (also known as Buddy) and her brother Bart are being evicted from the home they rent. They have a car, and waiting for their dad at the airport seems to be their only option until a drunk tries to get into their car and frightens both of them. Bart doesn't want Buddy to live out of the car any longer, so he decides to go looking for his father.

Amy Kate travels to Montana by bus to stay with her mother's sisters. Aunt Addie and Aunt Cassie are friendly but cool, and Grandpa is forgetful and annoying. Everyone at her temporary home, school, and around town tell her that "Buddy" is a stupid name for a pretty girl, but she tries to explain that it is her father's nickname for her—a father she desperately misses. Slowly she learns that her mom may have stolen and married Aunt Addie's boyfriend. More important, she may have stolen the money Grandpa earned selling his story.

Upper-elementary age children will enjoy this fast paced, predictable novel.


A 3-6 NF Reviewed by Sharon Kuttler

From the common dandelion to the rare Lady's slipper, Ryden's beautiful photographs and interesting text introduce the pleasure and allure of wildflowers to children. A color photograph of each wildflower is accompanied by the plant's common and scientific names, its bloom times, and information about the plant written in a conversational tone. Thirty-eight plants are included.

While not a substitute for a wildflower field guide, the exquisite color photographs and simple, interesting text make this an enchanting book. Included in the book are an introduction, contents page, and a list of further reading suggestions. The lack of an index is a shortcoming. In addition, Ryden does not indicate where these wildflowers may be found, and several do not grow in the dry western states. Still, the interesting tidbits of information will make readers want to get acquainted with each wildflower.


* PreS-2 FI PB Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Shadusa likes to show off his muscles. He tells his wife Shettu that he is the strongest man
in the world, so strong that from now on she must call him “Master Man.” Shettu warns him not to be so proud, telling him that there will always be another who is stronger whom they might someday meet. Her warning proves true. Shettu encounters a woman who tells her that her husband is the strongest man in the world and goes by the name Master Man. When Shettu tells Shadusa about the woman and her husband, the angry Shadusa sets out to teach this man a lesson. He loses his courage when he discovers that his competition is a giant of a man who can kill an elephant with his bare hands. Shadusa runs away, and then meets stranger who also calls himself Master Man. The stranger is furious when Shadusa tells him that another goes by his name. While Shadusa hides, the two master men fight so noisily that they are eventually lifted up past the clouds, where they remain forever. The two make so much noise every time they fight that people refer to the noise as thunder. But what the noise is is really “two fools fighting forever to see which one is Master Man.”

Shepard’s story has its roots in the Hausa folklore of Nigeria. The well paced, amusing narrative warns of the dangers of boasting. The text follows the set-up of a comic book, including dialogue in bubbles above the characters’ heads. Wisniewski’s paper cut illustrations are expressive, energetic, and funny. Shepard includes an explanation of the Hausa legend at the end of the book.


A Preschool FI PB Reviewed by Doorly Mora

This is a perfect bedtime story for children as they contemplate the events of their day. Little Rabbit tells his mom that the best part of his day was the “Tiempo para hacer algo especial. Tiempo para reir y tiempo para una sonrisa” (“Time to make a special thing, Time to laugh and time to giggle.”). He also spent “time alone,” something everyone—even little bunnies and children—need.

This is a great book. Though written in Spanish, it has English translations. The simple illustrations are a nice touch.


B+ 6+ FI Reviewed by Tom Wright

The year is 2008, and Mt. Rainer has erupted, causing white ash to fall relentlessly. Crops are failing, fuel is scarce, and looting rampant. Sixteen-year-old Miles is forced to grow up quickly to help support his family. A natural tinkerer, Miles constructs a man-powered vehicle using bicycles and sailboat parts to transport himself, his parents, and younger sister to safety. The family traverses a surreal landscape, facing many dangerous encounters. Road bandits, barricaded villages, and squatters challenge them on their journey. Eventually the family reaches a spot of safety and hope, despite the increasingly dangerous world around them.

Survival-literature fans will enjoy this easy, brisk read. Perhaps it is too brisk—it ends before expected in a somewhat doubtful way. However, young teenagers will enjoy descriptions of an altered culture and plausible scenes of suspense.


B 4-7 FI Reviewed by Cinda Clement

The Lee family, originally from China, has moved to West Virginia, and the children are eager to celebrate Christmas. Their friend, Miss Lucy, invites them to celebrate with her, but Papa insists Christmas has no place in a Chinese family. When Papa becomes critically ill, Joan realizes that she must recover Papa’s dream soul so he won’t die. In doing so, she realizes the
value of her Chinese culture and her Papa’s dedication to the family.

This is the story of children who learn to appreciate their family and heritage, and parents who understand the difficulty of merging cultures. The book is interesting, though not truly engrossing, like some fiction.


A 3+ PB Reviewed by Vicky M. Turner

During the Ching Ming (“Supreme Light”) Festival, Grandmother and Grandson gather to celebrate their ancestors with tofu, mushrooms, vegetables, and winter melon soup. Grandmother tells the story of her great-grandfather, one of the “coolies” who helped build the transcontinental railroad. After the railroad reached Promontory Point in Utah, he and his brother took one of the first trains back to San Francisco, where they started a store in China Town. Eventually they made enough money to send for their mother and other brothers.

Beautiful, vivid artwork complements a well-written story. Next year’s summer reading program is centered on cultures from around the world that will visit Utah in 2002. This would be an excellent book to use with the program.


* 1-3 FI PB Reviewed by AnnMarie Hamar

Zeman’s story opens with Sindbad the sailor telling Sindbad the porter of the adventures he had while sailing. Having grown tired of city life, Sindbad persuades some fellow merchants to take him on their travels. After several months at sea, the group is blown off-course by fierce winds and wash up on the treacherous Mountain of the Monkeys. Sindbad and the crew encounter a beast with eyes like fire, horrible sea monsters, and a snake the size of a dragon. Sindbad is finally rescued by a group of foreign men who mistake him for an invader and threaten to kill him. Sindbad convinces them to spare his life by telling them who he is and the adventures he has undergone. Although Sindbad claims that the voyage has convinced him to return to Baghdad forever, the reader gets the impression that it won’t be long before he’s off on another adventure.

The story is based on *The Thousand and One Nights.* Zeman’s retelling is fast-paced and full of adventure, often mixing humor and elements of horror. Her detailed, lush illustrations, done in colored pencil, pencil, and watercolor, suggest the texture of Persian carpets and tapestries. Each illustration is framed with a border of arabesques, flowers, and animals. Zeman ends her book with a note on Shahrazad and the origins of the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights.*