

NEW BOOKS

--for readers in the elementary school and middle school

Reviewed by Norine Odland
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Avi. NIGHT JOURNEYS. Pantheon, 1979. 143 pp. \$6.95.

A river adventure, set in Pennsylvania in 1767, moves with well-paced episodes to relate the search for two young indentured persons from New Jersey. The language resembles the style of Colonial America but not to the extent that it interferes with ease of reading. There is dignity in the lettering for headings and chapters and for each of the four parts of the book. 11-14.

Bates, Betty. MY MOM, THE MONEY NUT. Holiday House, 1979. 158 pp. \$6.95.

The conversation and description in the novel are brisk and believable. The moral--understand your mother, she had a hard life when she was growing up--is dealt out with humor and sincerity. The reader can conclude the insights without the last page which summarizes the point in case you have not gotten it. 10-12.

Berson, Harold. JOSEPH AND THE SNAKE. Macmillan, 1979. 28 pp. \$6.95.

A French tale retold with a flare for the unusual and the unexpected. Snake is tricked into returning to be trapped under a rock; a fox is the hero, and the snake eventually makes Joseph the real winner. Grey and rose colored illustrations of French countryside and interiors of buildings are velvet-like in texture. Each episode of the story is depicted in pictures so that children who hear the story can re-tell it with the pictures for guides. 6-9.

Carrick, Carol. A RABBIT FOR EASTER. ill. by Donald Carrick. Greenwillow, 1979. 32 pp. \$6.95.

The tone of the text is as soft as the blue and green colors of the scenes in the kindergarten class where Paul is given the privilege of taking Sam, the pet rabbit, home for Easter. The drawing, choice of color, and color separation exhibit the illustrator's fine talents. 4-8.

Chew, Ruth. THE WITCH'S GARDEN. Hastings House, 1979. 112 pp. \$5.95.

The devices for magic are mint leaves, water that shrinks things to tiny sizes, and a dragon in a cave. A boy, a girl and an elderly new next door neighbor with a magic

garden provide the action in a story of pure make-believe with none of the subtlety of fantasy. Black and white drawings are eerie and shadowy. 8-10.

Chorao, Kay. *MOLLY'S LIES*. Seabury, 1979. 32 pp. \$7.50. Molly would like to talk her way out of going to school, but when that does not work she uses similar tactics in school. The soft pencil drawings extend and expand the story. Kindergarten class children like it best if they are close to the book. The softness of the picture limits distance for projection. 5-8.

Christian, Mary Blount. *THE LUCKY MAN*. ill. by Glen Rounds. Macmillan, 1979. 63 pp. \$6.95. Felix, the lucky man, gets deeper and deeper into trouble but the reader will keep hoping there is a way for him to win. Wry humor in text and pictures. A good story which is worth reading not just because it is "easy-to-read." 7-10.

Cleary, Beverly. *RAMONA AND HER MOTHER*. ill. by Alan Tiegreen. Morrow, 1979. 208 pp. \$6.95. Ramona is growing up in a natural, sometimes painful, way and she is testing herself and those she has assumed were her friends. Cleary has used language precisely and gracefully to give honest views of a youngster. Humor is genuine so the reader feels it--e.g., the pajamas Ramona wears under her school clothes will make readers squirm and smile. 7-10 (and all Ramona fans).

Craft, Ruth and Irene Haas. *CARRIE HEPPLE'S GARDEN*. ill. by Irene Haas, McElderry/Atheneum, 1979. \$9.95. Delicate detailed water colors, with green predominating, set a mood for a rhythmic text relating an adventure three children have when their ball goes over the wall of Carrie's garden. There's a lesson but no preaching. For looking and for listening. 4-8.

Davis, Burke. *MR. LINCOLN'S WHISKERS*. ill. by Douglas Forsline. Coward McCann, 1979. 48 pp. \$6.95. Documented story of Lincoln's receiving a letter from Grace Bedell advising him to grow a beard to enhance his chances for being elected. Succinct writing with no condescension. Drawings are reproduced in brown tones which look right for the period. The appropriate references to Mary Todd Lincoln treat her with respect. Young children enjoy having it read to them; adults are fascinated by the story. Strongest appeal for 8 and up.

Delton, Judy. *BRIMHALL TURNS TO MAGIC*. ill. by Bruce Degen. Lothrop, 1979. 63 pp. \$5.95.

Brimhall is learning magic and the joke is on Brimhall when he produces a rabbit from a hat but cannot make the rabbit, Roger, disappear. Children can solve the mystery before Brimhall finds the solution. The conversation flows smoothly with easy transitions from one person to another. Detailed and accurate black and brown drawings develop personification with humor. 7-9.

dePaola, Tomie. *OLIVER BUTTON IS A SISSY*. ill. by author. Harcourt, Brace, unpaged. \$6.95.

Oliver likes to paint, sing, and dance; he does not like to play ball or do some other things boys are supposed to do. The ending of the story is a surprise, one children discuss with real insight. The artist/author uses a light touch of humor and never rejects people, only the things they do and want Oliver to do. 5-9.

Farber, Norma. *THERE GOES FEATHERTOP!* ill. by Marc Brown. Unicorn/Dutton, 1979. 26 pp. \$6.95.

This story in verse is adapted from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Feathertop" with conversation that appeals to children. The scarecrow comes from Mrs. Rigby's concoction, is rejected in high society, and asks to return to his place, making children laugh and hardly ever scaring crows. The moral is there for the taking. The pen and ink drawings are appropriate in subject and in style for nineteenth century America. 7-10.

Feder, Paula Kurzband. *WHERE DOES THE TEACHER LIVE?* ill. by Lillian Hoban. Dutton, 1979. 48 pp. \$5.95.

A natural question is handled by three children in a systematic way: they observe the teacher leaving school but each time she goes in a different direction. A mild detective story which will hold the interest of beginning readers. Pictures are expressive and help tell the story but they are poorly reproduced with the blueness overdone. The dark magenta cover contributes a sinister look too strong for the story's content. 5-7.

Fritz, Jean. *STONEWALL*. ill. by Stephen Gammell. Putnam, 1979. 156 pp. \$7.95.

A fine story and convincing history; tells about the man and the times in which he lived. The author lives up to her reputation for authenticity, and her style makes the text believable and alive. Jackson's complicated personality is described without attempting to explain why he was that way.

Illustrations fit the tone of the text and events more than expand details of the text. 9 and up.

Gag, Wanda. *THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE*. ill by Margot Tomes.

Coward, McCann, 1979. 32 pp. \$6.95.

The small size, the muted colors, and the interpretation of the characters are all just right for the Gag translation. A story of magic far better than most of its kind. Few single stories from collections warrant a book but this one does; it deserves individuality. Will be read and re-read. 6-12.

George, Jean Craighead. *RIVER RATS, INC.* Dutton, 1979. 136 pp. \$7.95.

The escapade of two thirteen-year-old boys on the rushing Colorado River moves out to the desert when they must search for their way home. In a relatively short text, a panorama of nature and contemporary society moves swiftly to a reasonable conclusion. 11-15.

Glubok, Shirley. *THE ART OF THE COMIC STRIP*. Macmillan, 1979. 52 pp. \$8.95.

Lively, well organized history of an American art form, the comic strip. History and comments about art styles appeal to a wide range of readers. Paper is pink and peach with examples of the comics in black and white. 9 and up.

Greaves, Margaret. *A NET TO CATCH THE WIND*. ill. by Stephen Gammell. Harper, 1979. 40 pp. \$6.89.

The story describes the attempts of a greedy king to capture the silvery steed for which his daughter desires only freedom. Words and pictures translate a spirit of strength and conflict surrounded by faith that the horse and justice will prevail. The artist's pencil technique adds a haunting drama to the text. The metaphor that is the title will expand in meaning for children who hear and read the book. 7-12.

Hildick, E. W. *THE CASE OF THE PHANTOM FROG*. ill. by Lisl Weil. Macmillan, 1979. 121 pp. \$6.95.

The McGurk organization takes the case to solve the frog mystery as a face-saving device when they really are hired for a baby-sitting job. Joe tells the story but there is a minimal amount of first person narration because the other four members are active in the quest to unravel the mystery of the Cuban Frog. Black and white drawings follow the text with precision and use slight exaggeration to bring out humor. 8-11.

Hoban, Tana. *ONE LITTLE KITTEN*. ill by author. Greenwillow, 1979. 24 pp. \$6.95.

Objects and people have been the subjects of most of the talented photographer's books. Getting the kittens to strike the right pose is something children appreciate. The surprise photo on the last page makes the reader want to start over again to enjoy the ending when you know it is there. Words, though few, are powerful and easily recognized because they are precise, without ambiguity. All ages.

Hoffman, E. T. A. *THE NUTCRACKER*. adapted by Janet Schulman. ill. by Kay Chorao. Dutton, 1979. 64 pp. \$6.95.

Adaptation of the story in the version children enjoy when seeing the ballet interpretation. Black and white illustrations underscore the drama and leave imagination unrestricted. Well designed; total visual impression is pleasing. All ages.

Harris, Christie. *MOUSE WOMAN AND THE MUDDLEHEADS*. ill. by Douglas Tait. Atheneum, 1979. 130 pp. \$7.95.

Seven stories told by Mouse Woman, a Supernatural Being, about the creatures who did not do things her way, the proper way. Conversation carries the stories in these tales from the Northwest Coast. 8-12.

Jeffers, Susan. *IF WISHES WERE HORSES*. ill. by author. Dutton, 1979. unpage. \$9.95.

An exquisite picture book in full color using eight nursery rhymes, each about horses. The children, adults, and other creatures are round and rollicking. Horse enthusiasts of all ages and young children will find the book worth many return visits. 4-7.

Kahl, Virginia. *WHOSE CAT IS THAT?* Scribners, 1979. 32 pp. \$7.95.

In a kind of cumulative tale the talented artist - storyteller builds a second story on the first; a mystery develops because there is only one cat but seven names for her. Alliteration in the seven names and the humor at the expense of adult committees brings chuckles from listeners. The green, red-orange, and black colors are clear against white paper. 5-9.

Kendall, Carol and Yao-wen Li, retold. *SWEET AND SOUR. TALES FROM CHINA*. ill. by Shirley Felts. Seabury, 1979. 112 pp. \$7.95.

Twenty-four Chinese tales, some one page long and others longer, are retold in succinct prose. Delicate drawings express the spirit of the texts as often as developing details of the story content. Oral reading by an adult can introduce the collection to older capable readers. 10-12.

Kha, Dang Manh, told to Ann Nolan Clark. IN THE LAND OF SMALL DRAGON. A VIETNAMESE FOLKTALE. ill. by Tony Chen. Viking, 1979. 34 pp. \$8.95.

A traditional Vietnamese folktale is told in metric form. Proverbs in the text enunciate the philosophy of the tale. Black and white half-tone drawings alternate with warm full color paintings. Children who hear the story recognize its similarity to Cinderella, and they are eager to compare versions and styles. 8-11.

Lexau, Joan M. THE SPIDER MAKES A WEB. ill. by Arabelle Wheatley. Hastings House, 1979. 40 pp. \$5.95.

The beauty and mystery of spiders and their webs is treated with quiet dignity in text and pictures. The sequence moves from spring through fall when eggs are left safe in a basket to be there until spring when baby spiders will begin their journeys. 6-11.

Lobel, Arnold. A TREEFUL OF PIGS. ill. by Anita Lobel. Greenwillow, 1979. 32 pp. \$7.95.

A farmer, his wife, and their pigs are depicted in colorful detail. The text, as tightly controlled as the visual interpretation of it, gives the reader/listener a tale of the impossible happening, especially when it is absolutely necessary that it happen. Funny in a quiet way. 4-8.

Parish, Peggy. BE READY AT EIGHT. ill. by Leonard Kessler. Macmillan, 1979. 61 pp. \$6.95.

Mill Molly will be ready at eight but she cannot remember what is going to happen at that time. The story builds as events of the day fail to give her the answer. When readers discover it is her own birthday she forgot they may suspect Miss Molly really had fooled everyone. Easy reading is aided by wise word placement in lines and by picture clues. 6-8.

Roy, Ron. AWFUL THURSDAY. ill. by Lillian Hoban. Pantheon, 1979. 42 pp. \$3.95.

The horror of having allowed a borrowed tape recorder to be smashed by the school bus provides believable discussion and real suspense. The fact that the lady from the library who let Jack borrow the machine is named Miss Hope may be a clue too subtle for some readers. The black and white drawings emphasize facial expressions and actions. An easy-to-read book. 6-8.

Shura, Mary Francis. MISTER WOLF AND ME. ill. by Konrad Hack. Dodd, Mead, 1979. 128 pp. \$5.95.

A dog story that is a real tear-jerker but the tears are more for the boy than for the dog. No words are wasted and the drama and mystery will hold any reader who is willing to read and to believe. Read it aloud to grades four or five; they will not want you to stop. Could be read in 3 or 4 sessions. 9-12.

Simon, Seymour. ANIMAL FACT/ANIMAL FABLE. ill. by Diane de Groat. Crown, 1979. 44 pp. \$7.95.

The fable is a short statement with a full page humorous illustration; the fact is revealed when the page is turned and the text, also with drawings, offers a scientific explanation to prove or disprove the fable. The pictures done originally in water color and colored pencils, are printed in four colors. 6-10.

NEW BOOKS

—for readers in middle school, junior high school, and senior high school
Reviewed by Connie Gremore
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Adler, C. S. THE MAGIC OF THE GLITS. ill. by Ati Forberg. Macmillan, 1979. 112 pp. \$7.95.

In attempting to entertain a despondent eight-year-old girl, a twelve-year-old boy invents Glits, creatures who grant wishes and produce joy fizz. As he works to pull her out of her depression over her mother's death, he discovers stores of creativity within himself and develops from a self-centered athlete to a thoughtful, sensitive, more mature person. The girl emerges as a strong, intelligent person whose silence masks her ability to solve her own problems, providing a surprise ending. Adults are depicted realistically, if not a bit negatively. Dialogue clearly and economically reveals how characters relate to one another. Black and white illustrations are beautifully done.

Anderson, Margaret J. IN THE CIRCLE OF TIME. Knopf, 1979. 181 pp. \$6.95.

From a Scottish circle of stones, a lame boy and an American girl are transported 200 years into the future to discover a simple, free, peaceful people threatened by enslavement to a race still dependent on technology. Much action and suspense with narrow escapes. Ending suggests the artistic boy's leaving his own hard-working parents to live with his