

Book Reviews for 2004

Why Epossumondas Has No Hair on His Tail by Coleen Salley; illustrated by Janet Stevens

Reading Level: Ages 3 9

Poor Epossumondas the opossum wonders why everyone else has a fluffy tail while his is bald so he asks his mama who tells him the story of his great-great-grandpa and a persimmon stealing plan that went awry.

Reviewer: SH

Love and Roast Chicken: A Trickster Tale from the Andes Mountains by Barbara Knutson

Reading Level: Ages 3 8

Cuy the Guinea Pig has several funny adventures as he tries to fill his belly while avoiding being eaten by Fox in this adaptation of a Peruvian folktale. Cuy will be reminded many readers of his distant cousin, Brer Rabbit.

Reviewer: SH

Cactus Soup by Eric A. Kimmel; pictures by Phil Huling

Reading Level: Ages 4 8

In this retelling of the classic folktale, Stone Soup, the people of San Miguel hide all their food and dress in rags to try to convince a band of soldiers that they have nothing to share, but when the soldiers begin to make soup from a cactus thorn, the villagers' curiosity and desire to taste this unique soup get the better of them.

Reviewer: SH

Hot Day On Abbott Avenue by Karen English; Illustrated by Javaka Steptoe

Reading Level: Grades K - 4

On a hot summers day two friends, Kishi and Rene have had a fight, are not speaking to one another and have nothing to do. Then they become distracted by the sound of a skipping game and soon both friends get caught up in the game and reunite their friendship. The books creative and detailed illustrations that almost stand off the page makes for a visually interesting and unique read.

Reviewer: MG

Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale by Mo Willems

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 6

When Trixie and her daddy go to the Laundromat, Knuffle Bunny comes too. Unfortunately, Knuffle Bunny doesn't go home with them and Trixie, who doesn't speak yet, tries everything to get her daddy to understand what is wrong. This creatively illustrated book will appeal to anyone who has ever loved a stuffed animal (or an opinionated toddler).

Reviewer: SH

The Toughest Cowboy: Or How the West was Tamed by John Frank; illustrated by Zachary Pullen

Reading Level: Ages 4 7

Grizz Brickbottom is the toughest cowboy in the west, and his fellow cowboys sometimes get on his nerves. So, he decides to get himself a sleek, strong, cattle-herding, bobcat-chasing dog, but somehow he comes back with something quite different.

Reviewer: SH

Science Verse by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith

Reading Level: Ages 4 Adult

This time its science parodies of famous poems and nursery rhymes. Evolution is written to the tune of The Battle Hymn of the Republic. Scientific Method at the Bat sounds much like it did when Casey was batting. And Mary Had a . . . in this case, a parasite. Even those unfamiliar with Jabberwocky will love the language of Gobblegooky. A CD of the poems is included. Other books by Scieszka are Baloney (Henry P.) and Math Curse. I think that I will never see books as funny as these three.

Reviewer: HG

Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah! (A Letter from Camp) by Allan Sherman and Lou Busch; illustrated by Jack E. Davis

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

An amusing picture-book version of the early 1960s Grammy Award winning tune made famous by musical humorist/performer Allan Sherman. The bold illustrations are hilarious and engagingly capture the larger-than-life horrors of the first day at Camp Granada.

Reviewer: NB

Tick-Tock, Drip-Drop! A Bedtime Story by Nicola Moon; illustrated by Eleanor Taylor

Reading Level: Ages 3-7

If youve ever had trouble falling asleep, youll love this charming story about Rabbit, whose sleep is disturbed by every household noise he hears, and his friend, Mole, who wears himself out by eliminating the noises so Rabbit can drift off into a restful sleep. But will Mole ever be able to visit Dreamland?

Reviewer: NB

Ruby and the Sniffs by Michael Emberley

Reading Level: Ages 4 to 8

Youll notice a resemblance to a well-known tale about a girl and three critters in this very funny story about a feisty mouse who, suspecting burglars in the apartment upstairs, sneaks away from her babysitter and sets out to investigate the strange noises she hears. She encounters some new neighbors, an eccentric family of pigs (who have the audacity to call her a gerbil!), but the story doesnt end there!

Reviewer: NB

Mrs. Biddlebox by Linda Smith; pictures by Marla Frazee

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

In this delightful rhyming story, Mrs. Biddlebox wakes up on the wrong side of her bunk, and her bad morning begins. Everything is wrong! Determined not to let her troubles get the best of her, she magically scoops away the bad stuff and turns it into something delicious.

Reviewer: NB

The Mighty Asparagus by Vladimir Radunsky

Reading Level: Ages 5 - 9

Gorgeous artwork accompanies this offbeat, humorously told story about a king who is extremely displeased with a giant asparagus that suddenly appears in his yard. The tale presents valuable lessons on how cooperation, the tiniest effort, and even listening to your mother can accomplish the seemingly impossible.

Reviewer: NB

Ruggles by Anne Fine; pictures by Ruth Brown

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 9

Ruggles, an old dog with wanderlust, tells what his days are like throughout the four seasons.

Reviewer: SH

Poodlena by E. B. McHenry

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 6

A pink, pampered poodle enjoys going to the dog park, but never plays with the other dogs until a fateful encounter changes her attitude on life.

Reviewer: SH

Good Dog Paw by Chinlun Lee

Reading Level: Ages 3 7

Paw is a lucky dog who's owner is a vet and every day he travels with her to the animal hospital where his job is to comfort the patients with his songs. Paw's songs and very important message about what the most important thing is to keep animals (and people) healthy will be enjoyed by all.

Reviewer: SH

Vera Rides a Bike by Vera Rosenberry

Reading Level: Ages 5 8

When Vera's tricycle disappears one day at the park her parents give her her birthday present early, a bicycle! Vera loves the bicycle and learns to ride it without training wheels, unfortunately she doesn't learn how to stop. When she decides to ride alone around the schoolyard one day, she discovers the hard way how important the brakes are!

Reviewer: SH

Actual Size by Steve Jenkins

Reading Level: Ages 3 9

This simple animal book is illustrated with paper collages which are the actual size of the animal represented. From a 1/3 inch dwarf goby to the foot wide eye of a giant squid this fun book will surprise you with each turn of the page.

Reviewer: SH

Magic Thinks Big by Elisha Cooper

Reading Level: Ages 3 to 8

Magic, a very plump feline, takes his time making decisions, especially when he sits in the doorway contemplating whether he should go out, stay in, or remain where he is. He finds each

option appealing as he lets his imagination picture, through striking artwork, the fabulous adventures he could have. Readers will be captivated with this rare glimpse into a cats mind and by being introduced to the real Magic, who appears on the back cover.

Reviewer: NB

Duck for President by Doreen Cronin; illustrated by Betsy Lewin

Reading Level: Ages 3 and up

Tired of doing his chores assigned by Farmer Brown, Duck decides the farm needs a new boss and holds an election that he wins. Sadly, Duck discovers that being the farm boss is not an easy job and sets his sights on higher ambitions, first as governor and, when that doesnt work out, as president. Kids will love this feisty and politically savvy duck, and adults will appreciate the subtle humor throughout the story. Another fun book by the author of Diary of a Worm and Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type.

Reviewer: NB

Gator Gumbo by Candace Fleming; pictures by Sally Anne Lambert

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

In this Cajun variation of The Little Red Hen sassy Skunk, Otter and Possum learn the hard way that teasing ones elders is never a good idea.

Reviewer: SH

Monsieur Gator is getting old, and he is too slow to catch tasty meals such as Possum, Otter and Skunk who delight in teasing him. He may be aging, but Monsieur Gator is not stupid, and he concocts a plan that includes his mothers gumbo recipe. In this Cajun takeoff of The Little Red Hen, Monsieur Gator just may get the tasty meal he craves. If you like the flavor of this one, try Petite Rouge by Mike Artell.

Reviewer: NB

Diary of a Wombat by Jackie French; illustrated by Bruce Whatley

Reading Level: Ages 2 8

Lovable Wombat keeps a diary of his daily activities, which include eating, digging holes, and

LOTS of sleeping. When he decides his usual meal of grass is getting boring, he sets out to train his new neighbors so they will give him special treats and ultimately decides that humans make pretty good pets!

Reviewer: NB

A wild wombat keeps a diary of his daily activities before and after humans move into his territory. Even though there are no wombats in the U.S., any American child who has experienced a semi-tame squirrel or raccoon will enjoy this story.

Reviewer: SH

The Cat Who Walked Across France by Kate Banks; pictures by Georg Hallensleben

Reading Level: Ages 3 7

After his owner dies a cat is moved across country to a home where nobody cares about him and he is forgotten and left to run wild. Then one day the lonely cat takes matters into his own paws and begins the long journey back to his home by the sea where he remembers being happy.

Reviewer: SH

Manuelo the Playing Mantis by Don Freeman

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

A perfect portrayal of where there's a will, there's a way, this story of a praying mantis who wants to be a musician will delight you. Manuelo is determined to play a musical instrument and tries to make one using the materials that are available near the pond where he lives. After several attempts with no success, a friendly spider has a great idea. An enchanting story, never before published, by the late author of Corduroy.

Reviewer: NB

Ruby in Her Own Time by Jonathan Emmett; illustrated by Rebecca Harry

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Mother and Father Duck are expecting five little ducklings and are taking good care of their eggs. Four of them hatch, but one is late. Mother Duck is not worried. When Ruby finally arrives, she is much smaller than her siblings, but Mom's not upset. When it comes to other lessons, Ruby

doesn't learn as quickly as her brothers and sisters, but Mother knows Rubys time to blossom will come, and it does! An important lesson lovingly presented with a duck family you will absolutely adore.

Reviewer: NB

Moosetache by Margie Palatini; illustrated by Henry Cole

Reading Level: Ages 3 to 7

Moose has a mustache that just won't stop! He tries to style it in many different ways, but nothing seems to work. Then he meets Ms. Moose, who gives him some expert advice, and Moose is on the way to becoming the slickest (or stickiest!) mustachioed moose ever. Kids will absolutely delight in the in your face illustrations and the outrageously silly story.

Reviewer: NB

A Fairy in a Dairy by Lucy Nolan; illustrations by Laura J. Bryant

Reading Level: Ages 4-9

In this picture book fantasy the rural community of Buttermilk Hollow is in decline and, at the mayor's urging, all the farmers are considering selling their land to a developer who wants to build a toothpick factory. Farmer Blue realizes he could become rich by selling his land, but he doesn't want to see the countryside destroyed. He wishes there was a fairy godmother who could save his community, and soon after dairy products begin to magically appear in the strangest places

Please read this book to your child while there are still a few farms left in Lake County.

Reviewer: SH

Good Night, Copycub by Richard Edwards; pictures by Susan Winter

Reading Level: Ages 3-7

After a busy day with his mother, little Copycub bear is tired but unable to fall asleep. Mom tells him a bedtime story, and using his special talent (he's named Copycub for a reason) he is able to drift into pleasant dreams. Soothing watercolor illustrations and this adorable little bear will steal your heart.

Reviewer: NB

Up in Heaven by Emma Chichester Clark

Reading Level: Ages 3 9

When Arthur's faithful dog, Daisy, dies she goes to doggie heaven where she watches over him and his family as they mourn for her. Eventually, through dreams, she helps Arthur realize he is ready for a new puppy to join the family. This is the perfect book to help a child who has lost a beloved pet.

Reviewer: SH

Achoo! Bang! Crash! The Noisy Alphabet by Ross MacDonald

Reading Level: Ages 2 6

With its retro illustrations and zany slapstick humor this offbeat alphabet book is sure to please even the most jaded preschooler.

Reviewer: SH

This humorous, colorful and out-of-the-ordinary presentation of the alphabet has been typeset the old-fashioned way. After letter z the author has written a wonderful explanation of the unique and creative hand set 19th century wood type and printing process he used, which has been mostly lost to today's computer-set methods.

Reviewer: NB

Good Night Harry by Kim Lewis

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 7

Harry the toy elephant can't sleep. He tries everything from looking at his books to exercising and cleaning his room, but the more he tries to make himself sleepy, the more awake he is. Harry begins to think he'll never fall asleep, until his friends/roommates, Lulu and Ted, come to his aid. A warm and cuddly book guaranteed to make any sleepless youngster doze off.

Reviewer: NB

The Lonesome Polar Bear by Jane Cabrera

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 6

Eye-catching artwork and simple text tell the heartwarming story of a lonesome little polar bear who desperately wants a friend he can play with. His cloud companion tries to help out by dropping sparkling snowflakes to form animal friends for bear, but sadly they all melt away. One day another polar bear appears, but will he melt too?

Reviewer: NB

Quiet! by Paul Bright; illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 7

Baby Leo can't take his nap with all racket in the jungle so Papa Lion roars his loudest QUIET! and issues a warning: any creature waking up Leo will end up as Papa's meal. However, as one animal after another makes noise, Papa, though somewhat disgruntled because he is getting hungry, orders Quiet, as softly as he can. When the loudest noise ever echoes through the jungle, Leo wakes up! Who is the culprit? Comical illustrations make this a perfect read-aloud the entire family will enjoy.

Reviewer: NB

A Fine St. Patrick's Day by Susan Wojciechowski Illustrated by Tom Curry

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Every St. Patrick's Day two towns compete to see who could decorate better. Sick of losing every year a young girl in one of the towns comes up with the idea of painting everything in the village green (except the mailboxes they're government property and fire hydrants which must be yellow so they can be seen). When a stranger comes asking for help the town must decide whether or not to abandon their painting to help. The illustrations feature bold colors and are well suited for this delightful folk tale.

Reviewer: LY

Dear Tooth Fairy by Pamela Duncan Edwards; illustrated by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick

Reading Level: Ages 5 7

Claire's sixth birthday has come and gone and she has yet to lose a tooth, so she writes the tooth fairy one letter after another expressing her concerns until the tooth fairy answers back! Then a true correspondence begins in this cute book for any child who has "slow" teeth.

Reviewer: SH

Bad Boys by Margie Palatini; illustrated by Henry Cole

Reading Level: Ages 3 8

Willy and Wally Wolf need some place to hide after their failed pigs and grandma capers, so when they see a flock of sheep down in the meadow they think it is the perfect place to be on the lam. They soon discover however that it isn't so easy to pull the wool over their potential victims' eyes, and ewes aren't so easy to fleece.

Reviewer: SH

Two very naughty wolves on the lam and looking for a place to hide come across a flock of sheep and decide they have found the perfect spot to lay low with the possibility of dinner to boot! However, they get more than they bargain for in trying to fool the sheep, and the result of their escapade is not exactly what they expect. Kids will love this hilarious tale, and grownups will love the puns!

Reviewer: NB

Three Wise Old Women by Elizabeth T. Corbett; illustrated by Yu-Mei Han

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Going for a walk on a windy day, three ladies experience the pitfalls of letting their imaginations go wild and end up on a frolicking adventure. You'll wonder how wise they really are! Bright illustrations add to the fun of the wacky rhyming text, based on a 19th century nonsense poem.

Reviewer: NB

From Me to You by Anthony France; illustrated by Tiphonie Beeke

Reading Level: Ages 4- 8

Rat is down in the dumps and bored with his life until he receives a mysterious letter. Immediately perked up by the message, he sets out to find who wrote it and discovers that maintaining friendships involves more than waiting around for friends to call. A valuable lesson presented in a very special way.

Reviewer: NB

Go to Sleep, Groundhog! by Judy Cox; illustrated by Paul Meisel

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Groundhog goes to bed for the winter and sets his alarm for February 2. But he keeps waking up early in late October, November, and December. Each time he awakes, he goes for a walk, thinking the exercise will make him tired. While walking, this adorable furry rodent sees magical holiday wonders he has never experienced before. After his December stroll, he finally falls asleep, but will he snooze so soundly he won't wake up for his special day? A delightful story for Groundhog Day or any day!

Reviewer: NB

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book by Lauren Child

Reading Level: Ages 4 8

Herb loves storybooks, but he treats them rather badly and thinks nothing of the damage he causes until one day he falls asleep on a book of fairytales and finds himself stuck in the vandalized stories.

Reviewer: SH

Too Many Pears! by Jackie French; illustrated by Bruce Whatley

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 7

Pamela is a likable black and white cow who LOVES pears, and she will go to great lengths to get her favorite fruit as you will see in the striking illustrations that perfectly portray Pamela's pear passion. Will the bovine family ever get any of the delicious fruit for themselves? See how

someone in her family solves this pearplexing problem!

Reviewer: NB

Gordon in Charge by Jill Newton

Reading Level: Preschool Grade 2

Gordon the goat considers himself the boss of the farm and takes great delight in ordering the other animals around until a goose named Gordon shows up and challenges him for the title. Youll adore all the brightly illustrated barnyard critters on this very out-of-the-ordinary farm.

Reviewer: NB

A Lucky Dog: Owney, U.S. Rail Mail Mascot by Dirk Wales; illustrations by Diane Kenna

Reading Level: Ages 4 8

This book tells the true story of a stray dog who wanders into a post office one day and not only finds a place to live, but also develops a taste for adventure which eventually takes him around the world.

Reviewer: SH

A Frog in the Bog by Karma Wilson; illustrated by Joan Rankin

Reading Level: Ages 3-7

A frog, sitting on a log, devours all the insects he can, growing larger with each meal, until he discovers it is not a log hes sitting on. Thats when the fun starts! The illustrations are perfection in this counting and rhyming romp.

Reviewer: NB

Suki's Kimono by Chieri Uegaki; illustrated by Stphane Jorisch

Reading Level: Ages 4 7

Suki is so proud of the kimono that her grandmother gave her she insists on wearing it for the first day of school instead of the "cool" clothes her sisters think she should wear.

Reviewer: SH

How Do Dinosaurs Get Well Soon? by Jane Yolen; illustrated by Mark Teague

Reading Level: Ages 2 5

When dinosaurs are sick do they whine and complain or do they follow their parents' (and doctors') advice? Read this book to your favorite sneezing youngster and find out.

Reviewer: SH

Old Turtle and the Broken Truth by Douglas Wood; watercolors by Jon J. Muth

Reading Level: Ages 6 and older

In this wonderful allegory about intolerance, the truth falls from the sky and is broken into two pieces. The easily found piece says, "You are loved." The animals all recognize that it is only a part of the truth and search until they find the whole truth, but humanity takes the partial truth as The Truth and peace and harmony are destroyed. Luckily there is one little girl who wonders why the world is decaying and asks the animals for help.

Reviewer: SH

Falling for Rapunzel by Leah Wilcox; illustrated by Lydia Monks

Reading Level: Ages 3 8

Because the tower is so high, Rapunzel has trouble hearing what the prince is asking her to do when he comes to rescue her.

Reviewer: SH

The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Vashti thinks shes a terrible artist. Her art teacher challenges her to draw a dot. When Vashti sees her finished dot on display behind the teachers desk, she decides she can do better. The beautifully simple illustrations add to this sweet book about finding hidden talents.

Reviewer: LY

The Very Smart Pea and the Princess-to-Be by Mini Grey

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

A whimsical contemporary version of the famous fairytale, The Princess and the Pea, this story is told by the pea. Youll be amused by the cranky queen and her vegetable-loving son, who must marry a real princess or lose his allowance. If you pay close attention, you just might figure out who will become the princess.

Reviewer: NB

The Bravest Mouse by Maria Barbero

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 8

A little mouse, living in an old house with his extended family, is unhappy with his appearance, but he feels much better about himself after he succeeds with a dangerous plan and becomes a hero to his relatives and neighbors. Great illustrations!

Reviewer: NB

Ten Little Mummies: An Egyptian Counting Book by Philip Yates; illustrated by G. Brian Karas

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 7

Ten bored mummies leave their stuffy old tomb and set off for some exciting adventures in Ancient Egypt. These lovable creatures will amuse you as one by one they disappear. Lots of Egyptian fun facts relating to the comical illustrations are included on the endpapers.

Reviewer: NB

Names for Snow by Judi K. Beach; pictures by Loretta Krupinski

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 6

When a little rabbit asks his mama what snow is, she describes to him the unique nature of snow and presents appropriate names for its many different moods as the beautiful white flakes transform the perfectly illustrated country landscapes in various ways.

Reviewer: NB

Morning Glory Monday by Arlene Alda; illustrated by Maryann Kovalski

Reading Level: Ages 4 and older

A heartwarming story of a long ago summer in New York City. Alda and Kovalski bring a 1930s tenement to life to tell the tale of a homesick immigrant and her hopeful daughter. Based on a true story.

Reviewer: PC

Dragon: Hound of Honor by Julie Andrews Edwards

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Based on a 13th century story, The Legend of the Dog of Montargis, Dragon is a retelling of the story of faithful dog whose master has been murdered. Set in Medieval France, the book begins as three cousins, their childhood friend and Thierry, a ward of the Count of Montargis are reunited for a tournament. Aubrey de Montdidier, nephew to the count is engaged to the counts daughter, the beautiful Isabelle. Everything seems idyllic until the knight fails to appear at the jousts. Dragon leads Aubreys friends to the young mans body. As in the legend, King Charles V decrees a challenge between Dragon, who has witnessed the murder, and the only man the dog seems to hate. The outcome will decide guilt or innocence. Yes, the author is the actress Julie Andrews who won the Oscar for her role of Mary Poppins.

Reviewer: HG

The Teachers Funeral: A Comedy in Three Parts by Richard Peck

Reading Level: Grades 5-8

The author of A Long Way From Chicago and A Year Down Yonder is back with another hilarious tale set in rural America. It is the end of summer in 1904 and fifteen-year-old Russell is thrilled to

learn that his teacher has died. Russell has no use for school. He figures that with only six students the county will close the school for good. Then he finds, to his horror, that the new schoolteacher will be his very own big sister, Tansy. Readers will love all the characters but they will have to wait until the last sentence to find out how things turn out for each one.

Reviewer: HG

The Sea of Trolls by Nancy Farmer

Reading Level: Grades 5 and older

The talented author of *The House of the Scorpion* scores again with a sweeping saga based on Norse legend. Jack, the son of a Saxon farmer, finds his future changed when a powerful Bard chooses him as his apprentice. Jack is just beginning to learn the extent of his own powers when he and his young sister Lucy are enslaved by a band of Viking berserkers. Those powers are all that protect Jack and his sister from a terrible fate.

For other Norse adventures try *Raven of the Waves* by Michael Cadnum and *Troll Fell* by Katherine Langrish.

Reviewer: SJS

Olivers Game by Matt Tavares

Reading Level: Grades 1-4

Baseball, nostalgia, and patriotism come together in this beautifully written and illustrated story. Oliver helps out in his grandfathers sports memorabilia store. One day he comes across an old Chicago Cubs uniform and he is amazed to find out that it belonged to his grandfather. Oliver learns that his grandfather had practiced one day with the Cubs and was invited to come to tryouts. The outbreak of World War II and a war injury ended all that. Disappointed and disillusioned, his grandfather rediscovers his love of the game during the 1945 World Series. It is a love that both generations come to share.

Reviewer: HG

Blow Out the Moon by Libby Koponen

Reading Level: Grades 3-6

Based on the authors real-life experience during the 1950s, Libby and her family leave their home in the States to live for an extended period in England. When Libby is unhappy at her

English school, her parents allow her to enroll in an English boarding school. There she makes friends, learns how to ride a horse, and starts to fit into life in England. The book is filled with photos of family, friends and memorabilia. Its a wonderful way to enter a different time and place. Readers will be amazed to learn that Libby was only eight-years-old when she went away to school!

Reviewer: HG

The Secret Language of Girls by Frances ORoark Dowell

Reading Level: Grades 4-6

Kate and Marilyn have always been best friends. But when they started junior high and seventh-grader Flannery moved into the neighborhood, everything changed. Marilyn became interested in boys and cheerleading. Kate felt shut out, but then she found herself with a possible boyfriend. Told from each girls point of view, this book realistically describes changing friendships and feelings, doubts and pressures, and the power structure of a junior high school. You might also enjoy *Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems* by Kristine OConnell George.

Reviewer: HG

A Coyote's in the House by Elmore Leonard

Reading Level: Grades 4 6

When Antwan the coyote meets Buddy, a retired movie dog, Buddy suggests that Antwan move into his home and experience the life of a house dog, and afterwards Buddy can go with Antwan and see what life with a coyote is like. If you like anthropomorphic animal stories, such as Dick Kingsmith's *Babe: The Gallant Pig*, you will enjoy this tale.

Reviewer: SH

Spider-Man: Ultimate Picture Book #1 by Kathleen Duey; photographed by Robert Gould ; digital illustrations by Eugene Epstein

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 4

Fans of the Spider-Man movies will definitely want to check out this book. Told through the eyes of Peter Parker, the story will be familiar, but different to fans of the movies. What truly sets this book apart are the beautiful photographs used to tell the story. With multiple pictures on each page it truly feels like a comic book brought to life.

Reviewer: LY

Who Goes Home? by Sylvia Waugh

Reading Level: Grades 4 6

In this companion to Space Race and Earthborn Jacob, a half-alien, discovers that his father is really an Ormingatrig worker who's job is to protect others of his race as they do research on Earth.

Reviewer: SH

The Haunting of Granite Falls by Eva Ibbotson

Reading Level: Grades 4 6

When Carra, a Scottish castle is sold to a rich businessman who plans to ship the entire building to America he insists that there be no ghosts in residence. But after they accidentally stow away among the castle's parts the ghosts must find a new place to haunt in the New World.

Reviewer: SH

The Supernaturalist by Eoin Colfer

Reading Level: Grades 4 8

The author of the Artemis Fowl series has created another intriguing band of off-beat heroes. In Colfer's futuristic Earth, big business has replaced governments, lawyers are better armed than the police, orphans are used to test everything from cosmetics to biological weapons, and a band of teenagers wage a secret war against mysterious creatures only they can see which appear at accident sites and suck the life-forces out of critically injured victims.

Reviewer: SH

Blue Fingers: A Ninja's Tale by Cheryl Whitesel

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

In feudal Japan twins are considered bad luck, something Koji would agree with whole-heartedly. His twin seems to always be just a little bit better, while Koji feels he can't seem to do anything right. When his twin saves a rich merchant's life, Koji is surprised that his parents choose him to become the apprentice. After failing with the merchant, Koji runs away only to be captured by Ninjas, or, as they call themselves, blades of grass. The book begins somewhat slowly and focuses heavily on the culture of Ninjas, so it will not appeal to readers who wish for constant action. It is however very strong historical fiction and will leave the reader knowing far more about the fascinating world of Ninjas.

Reviewer: LY

Yankee Girl by Mary Ann Rodman

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 8

Alice Ann Moxley is surprised to find herself practically friendless after her family is moved to Jackson, Mississippi in 1964. The other sixth graders want nothing to do with the Yankee Girl whose father is an FBI agent and is responsible for protecting the civil rights of the Negroes. Jeb, her only friend, won't talk to her in public and in private tries to teach her about Southern ways. As if things weren't bad enough, the daughter of a Civil Rights leader, Valerie Taylor, arrives to integrate her class. Alice knows The Right Thing To Do, but she desperately wants to be accepted. This book is based on the experiences of the author who was ten when her father, an FBI agent, moved his family to Jackson in 1964.

Reviewer: HG

Lionboy by Zizou Corder

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 8

A world where cars have been banned for all but the most powerful and rich because of concerns over asthma, and featuring a boy who can speak to cats, this is an inventive book that marches to the beat of its own drummer. Charlie knows that his parents do important work, but never imagines that anyone would want to harm them, until he comes home one day and discovers them kidnapped. Charlie runs away from his parents' kidnappers and sets out to find his parents. With major parts of the book taking place on a floating circus, the streets of Paris, and aboard a train, the book has numerous delightful subplots while never losing focus of Charlie's overall goal. The book ends somewhat abruptly and will lead many readers to wait somewhat impatiently for the next book.

Reviewer: LY

TruckDogs: A Novel in Four Bites by Graeme Base

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

In this first novel, by acclaimed picture book writer, Base (*Animalia*, *The Eleventh Hour*) creates an imaginative world that combines animals and automobiles into such combinations a bulldozer and bulldog. The strength of the world carries the first half of the novel. Some readers might become bored by the plot featuring a band of evil TruckDogs taking over a town. This book, accompanied by twelve gorgeous illustrations should especially appeal to readers who enjoy machines. Base shows some promise as a novelist and this first effort will likely delight some readers with its inventive world and heavy doses of action.

Reviewer: LY

The Report Card by Andrew Clements

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

Fifth Grader Nora Rowley is a genius. However, she decided in kindergarten that she wished to be best friends with Stephen, a middle of the road kid, and that meant being a normal kid. Now she is in 5th Grade and dislikes some students' obsessions with grades, and especially the way tests make Stephen feel, and so she hatches a plan to make people think twice about what tests mean. This enjoyable novel carries not only Clements' typical theme of the power of what kids can achieve but also a thoughtful discussion of grades and standardized testing. The ending sees Nora's opinions evolve and will leave readers with some things to think about.

Reviewer: LY

Three Stories You Can Read to Your Teddy Bear by Sara Swan Miller; illustrated by True Kelley

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Teddy bears are so lucky to have this collection of three stories written especially for them, and you will love reading all three to your favorite bear. In the first story, teddy learns to walk, which, in the following stories, gets him into mischief as he visits the pantry and has an outdoor romp. You'll be amused at who gets blamed for the results of his adventures. A great book for teddy bear loverseven grown-up ones.

Reviewer: NB

Graphs by Bonnie Bader; illustrated by Mernie Gallagher Cole

Reading Level: Grades 1 - 3

At a family reunion picnic that he must attend, Gary Graff, who thinks he will be bored, gets all kinds of ideas for the graphs he has to make for his math homework and even has fun in the process. An All Aboard Math Reader.

Reviewer: NB

Fun with Dick and Jane

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

This book, one in a series called Read with Dick and Jane, is a reissue of stories from the famous Dick and Jane primers that were the staples of American schools from the 1940s through the 1960s. Now today's youngsters can meet Dick, Jane, Father, Mother, Sally, Spot, and Puff and enjoy the simple text with the charming original illustrations. Some other titles in the series are We Work, Go, Go, Go, Who Can Help? and Away We Go. A real blast from the past!

Reviewer: NB

I, Jack by Jack the dog as told to Patricia Finney

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Jack the HAPPY HAPPY HAPPY yellow lab, who is very proud of being thick, (except when it causes him to do something wrong which makes him SAD SAD) tells about a year in his life when two new apedogs and their GORGEOUS Samoyed, Petra, move in next door. Anyone who has

ever shared a house with a Labrador retriever or any other enthusiastic dog will love this book. Don't skip the footnotes written by the family cats!

Reviewer: SH

The Ravenmasters Secret: Escape from the Tower of London by Elvira Woodruff

Reading Level: Grade 4 and up

When fierce Scottish rebels are caught and imprisoned in the Tower of London, Forrest Harper is eager to prove his courage by helping his father watch over one of them. Their prisoner turns out to be less fierce than he had hoped, but still produces the much sought after adventures that Forrest has always longed for. Set in England in the year 1735, this is an exciting and quick read with short chapters. Even though it includes rat catchers, chimney sweeps, executions and a smelly moat, this one is hard to resist.

Reviewer: PC

Mimmy and Sophie: All Around the Town by Miriam Cohen; pictures by Thomas F. Yezerki

Reading Level: Grades 1 - 3

In six short vignettes, Cohen introduces Mimmy and Sophie, two sisters growing up in Brooklyn during the Depression. From the back alley to Coney Island, they have adventures, rivalries, and, always, each other. Yezerki's illustrations are a nice complement to this short chapter book.

Reviewer: PC

The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place by E.L. Konigsburg

Reading Level: Grades 4 -6

Margaret Rose Kane has been saved. After a disastrous stay at Camp Telequa, Margarets beloved Uncles agree she can stay with them for the rest of the summer. Margarets quirky Uncles Alex and Morris have been living at 19 Schuyler Place for 40 years and during this time they have built three magnificent towers. As Margaret recovers from a Camp Director who attempted to strangle Margarets spirit, she soon discovers that perhaps her Uncles are just as much in need of saving. Written as a companion to Silent to the Bone this book will remind fans far more of A View from Saturday. Embodied with a delightfully offbeat sense of humor and wonderful artistic and literary references, readers will find much to like in this satisfying tale.

Reviewer: LY

Race For The Sky: The Kitty Hawk Diaries of Johnny Moore by Dan Gutman

Reading Level: Grades 4-7

The dairies are fiction, but Johnny Moore is real as are all the other characters in this book. Teenager Johnny Moore witnessed the first flight of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk. In Gutmans book, Johnny helps the dingbatters from Ohio test gliders and finally, after several years of effort, the first aeroplane. Photographs and quotes add to the authenticity of the book Gutman manages to create a sense of suspense as Wilbur and Orville compete against their rivals in their race for the sky."

Reviewer: HG

Praying at the Sweetwater Motel by April Young Fritz

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

The book begins as twelve-year-old Sarah Jane Otis, her little sister and her mother flee from the abusive father. Too poor to rent an apartment, they wind up living in the Sweetwater Motel in Ohio. Starting seventh grade as a southern newcomer is bad enough, but some nasty girls in school label her Motel Girl. Sarah Jane makes a few misfit friends, but she misses her old life. Maybe her prayers will be answered and Daddy can change.

Reviewer: HG

Orville: A Dog Story by Haven Kimmel; pictures by Robert Andrew Parker

Reading Level: Grades 2 4

An ugly, abused, stray dog shows up at a remote farm and changes the lives of everyone around him.

Reviewer: SH

Offsides by Erik E. Esckilsen

Reading Level: Grades 6-8

When Tom Gray, a Native American, moves to a new town he is forced to make an agonizing decision. He had been a star soccer player at his high school so a starting position is guaranteed. But the symbol of the team is a war-painted Indian-head profile that he sees as an insulting stereotype. Tom becomes the leader of a group of outsiders that play soccer for fun until a wager puts Toms future on the line. Theres great soccer play-by-play and an issue to think about. Another good sports book is Danger Zone by David Klass.

Reviewer: HG

Rob&Sarah.com by P. J. Petersen and Ivy Ruckman

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Rob and Sarah meet online in a poetry chat-room. Rob is spending his junior year in an exclusive school for wealthy, but troubled teens. Sarah is an army brat who hopes that this latest move will be her last. The two reach out and share their lives with each other. They grow closer as they e-mail through the school year. But then Sarah receives a message that raises serious doubts about Robs identity. The authors wrote this novel e-mail by e-mail from their homes in California and Utah. Also try The Year of Secret Assignments by Jaclyn Moriarty.

Reviewer: HG

The Golems Eye by Jonathan Stroud

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

Heres the eagerly awaited sequel to The Amulet of Samarkand. In this second book of the Bartimaeus trilogy, Nathaniel is a very young, but rising magician in government circles. Bartimeaus is summoned once again when Nathaniel is charged with the responsibility for finding the people or creatures that destroyed a block of stores in London. The resistance and Kitty Jones, who made a brief appearance in the first book, are a large part of this volume. Theres political intrigue, a tomb robbery, an insane skeleton, and of course, some great footnotes.

Reviewer: HG

Bucking the Sarge by Christopher Paul Curtis

Reading Level: Grades 6-9

Fifteen-year-old Luther T, Farrell wants three things in life: to win the science fair, to date Shayla, and to distance himself from his mother, a.k.a. The Sarge. The latter is understandable since Mom evicts poor tenants from her buildings and cheats the patients in her nursing home. She also runs Luthers life as hes forced to help her carry out her schemes. Another person in Luthers life is Sparky, his womb to tomb buddy, who is always busy with hysterical get rich plans. Luther views his life with a well-developed sense of humor. His final revenge on The Sarge will make readers want to stand up and cheer. Other great books by Curtis are Bud, Not Buddy and The Watson Go to Birmingham-1963.

Reviewer: HG

Unexpected Magic: Collected Stories by Diana Wynne Jones

Reading Level: Grades 5 and older

In this wonderful collection of short stories (and one novella) by the well known fantasy author you will meet a child who's thoughts become reality, an annoying aunt who gets stuck on an island which can't seem to stay put, a walking stick named Carruthers, and much, much more.

Reviewer: SH

Double Helix by Nancy Werlin

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Senior Eli Samuels is incredibly smart, athletic, and has a wonderful girl that he loves. He also has a mother who is institutionalized with Huntingtons Disease and a father he barely speaks to. When Eli decides to postpone college and lands a dream job with Wyatt Transgenetics, his father is angry and hurt. The world famous geneticist, Dr. Quincy Wyatt, welcomes Eli to the company and introduces him to Kayla, the most perfect girl he has ever known. As the book progresses, Eli begins to discover some the connections between his family, Dr. Wyatt, Kayla, and himself. More than just a great thriller, this book raises questions about bio-medical ethics.

Reviewer: HG

The Boy Who Couldn't Die by William Sleator

Reading Level: Grades 5 8

After his best friend is killed in a plane crash Ken decides he needs to become invulnerable and, like the characters in fairytales, decides to hide his soul. Unfortunately, after he allows a woman

to remove and store his soul he finds that he has put himself in great peril than he has ever been in before.

Reviewer: SH

Holding at Third by Linda Zinnen

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

13-year-old Matt Bainter chooses to follow his mother and brother across the state when Tom needs last resort cancer treatment. Matt knows that hes sacrificing his chance to be on a championship baseball team with his best friends. Instead hes in a new school on a losing team while house sitting in a wealthy neighborhood. Matt suffers a batting slump and cant force himself to visit his brother in the hospital. With the help of his coach and his best friend, Matt is able to face the realities of his life. He learns that you cant always hit a home run; sometimes its enough to be holding at third. You may also enjoy *Danger Zone* by David Klass and *Painting the Black* by Carl Deuker.

Reviewer: HG

The Year of Secret Assignments by Jaclyn Moriarty

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

As an attempt to unite rich Ashbury snobs with lower life Brooker kids, a 10th grade pen pal project pairs best friends Lydia, Emily, and Cassie with Seb, Charlie, and Matthew. Seb and Charlie are great! Lydia and Seb trade secret assignments. One leads to setting off a false alarm to get Seb out of an exam. Emily gives Charlie lessons on *How To Date a Girl*. But Cassie, who has just lost her father, finds she has a mean and threatening pen pal. Events lead to a war of pranks between the schools. This is a wonderful book for fans of Ann Brashares' *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*.

Reviewer: HG

The Ring of the Slave Prince by Bjarne Reuter

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Tom OConnors dreary life drastically changes when he rescues a shipwreck Spaniard and a young slave whom the Spaniard claims in a prince. For other swashbuckling adventures try: *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Bloody Jack* by L.A. Meyer and *The Buccaneers* by

Iain Lawrence.

Reviewer: SJS

No Laughter Here by Rita Williams-Garcia

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

Akilah is looking forward to starting fifth grade with her best friend Victoria, who has spent the summer in her native country of Nigeria. The girls had been excited about Victoria's special coming of age ceremony, but Victoria returned quiet and solemn. After a sex education film in class, Akilah learns Victoria's secret.

Reviewer: HG

Wake the Dead by Monica A. Harris; illustrations by Susan Estelle Kwas

Reading Level: Grades 2-6

Henry is so loud he is told that he could "wake the dead," and he does! A dead funny romp through idioms follows as zombies explore the world and Henry tries to figure out how to get them back into their graves. This book will tickle your funny bone.

Reviewer: SH

The Train of States by Peter Sis

Reading Level: Grades 2-4

This fun book presents facts about each of the states, such as the state bird, flower, motto and a fun fact (did you know the first hamburger was served in 1895 in New Haven Connecticut?) as if the United States were a long circus train. Look closely at each train car for other interesting details, and don't forget to read the very back to find out why there is a winged pig in the Ohio car.

Reviewer: SH

The Cats in Krasinski Square by Karen Hesse; illustrated by Wendy Watson

Reading Level: Ages 8 and up

This is a beautiful, sensitive book with lovely full-page illustrations. Set during the holocaust, the young fictional narrator and her older sister, Mira, have escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto and are passing as Aryans. Brave Mira works for the Jewish Resistance. She tells her sister that a train will be arriving with Resistance workers who have satchels of food to be smuggled into the Ghetto. Then they learn that the Gestapo is lying in wait for the train. Based on a true incident, this story tells how the Resistance and a bunch of cats outwitted the Gestapo. *Let The Celebrations Begin!* by Margaret Wild is another book that extols the human spirit.

Reviewer: HG

The Truth About Poop by Susan E. Goodman; illustrated by Elwood H. Smith

Reading Level: Grades 3 8

This humorous, yet educational, book tells you everything you ever wanted to know about poop, including the biology of poop, poop in history, fun games to play with poop, and more.

Reviewer: SH

What Presidents Are Made Of by Hanoch Piven

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Seventeen of our most colorful presidents are featured in this uniquely humorous and informative book. Clever collage caricatures, using objects associated with each president, and witty text capture the individuality, notable oddities, and claim to fame of each chief executive illustrated. Includes a timeline of all 42 presidents.

Reviewer: NB

The Edmund Fitzgerald: The Song of the Bell by Kathy-Jo Wargin; illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen

Reading Level: Grades K - 4

An engrossing, partially poetic account of the disappearance, in November 1975, of the Edmund Fitzgerald, pride of the Great Lakes transport ships. The huge ship, crossing Lake Superior, was loaded with ore when it disappeared suddenly during a violent storm. Fabulous illustrations capture the danger and suspense of the voyage as readers learn of the ill-fated vessels

companion ship tracking the Fitzgerald on radar, the ships futile struggle against the monstrous wind and waves, the recovery of the ships bell, and the memorial to the Fitzgerald and those who perished.

Reviewer: NB

Shutting Out The Sky: Life in the Tenements of New York 1880-1924 by Deborah Hopkinson

Reading Level: Grades 4 and up

Hopkinson does a wonderful job of telling the stories of five young immigrants who settle in New York City at the turn of the 20th century. Her words, accompanied by photos from the time period, paint portraits of strong characters and hopeful faces. Hard to put down, this one brings history brilliantly to life.

Reviewer: PC

How Sweet It Is (and Was): The History of Candy by Ruth Freeman Swain; illustrated by John O'Brien

Reading Level: Grades 3 6

Did you know that the word "candy" comes from the Sanskrit word *khandā* meaning "a piece of sugar" or that a banquet was held during the Renaissance where all the plates and goblets were made of sugar and the guests ate the dishes for dessert? These facts and more are presented in this amusingly illustrated and informative book. Please try not to drool on the pages.

Reviewer: SH

Facing The Lion: Growing Up Maasai on the African Savanna by Joseph Lemasolai Lekuton

Reading Level: Grades 5-12

This is a biography that introduces the reader to a unique way of life that may be disappearing. Joseph grew up in a poor, nomadic tribe in Kenya where a family's wealth was dependent on the number of cows they owned. A law that declared one son from each family must attend school started Joseph on his educational odyssey. During the school term Joseph learned traditional subjects and Western ways, but during breaks he was a Maasai herder. One break, when he was twelve, included the traditional manhood circumcision ceremony. Another time he came face to face with a lion that was killing his family's cows. Joseph looks back and tells his story with humor and obvious love for his people. He is now a teacher in a private school in Washington, D.C., but

he returns to Kenya and his Maasai roots for several months each year.

Reviewer: HG

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers by Mordicai Gerstein

Reading Level: Ages 3 to 8

Winner of the 2004 Caldecott Medal, this book presents the thrilling account of a daring and dangerous stunt performed by aerial expert Philippe Petit, who in 1974 walked and danced on a wire suspended between the World Trade Centers twin towers. The dramatic illustrations capture the excitement and danger as well as the dizzying height. A fascinating remembrance of an unbelievable event associated with the two magnificent towers that are now a memory.

Reviewer: NB

Open Your Eyes: Extraordinary Experiences in Faraway Places edited by Jill Davis

Reading Level: Grades 5 and older

Eleven authors, such as M.T. Anderson, Katherine Paterson, and Lois Lowry, describe memorable encounters with other cultures and how these experiences changed their lives.

Reviewer: SH

Piece=Part=Portion: Fractions=Decimals=Percents by Scott Gifford; photographs by Shmuel Thaler

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 5

Bright and clever photographs illustrate the concept of fractions, and a simple explanation at the beginning of the book tells the reader how to calculate fractions, decimals and percents.

Reviewer: SH

Bruh Rabbit and the Tar Baby Girl by Virginia Hamilton; paintings by James Ransome

Reading Level: Ages 5 and up

One last work from a well-respected storyteller, this familiar folktale is in Gullah speech, but it

wont be hard for fans of trickster tales to decipher. Ransomes illustrations are a nice complement to Hamiltons engaging version of this story.

Reviewer: PC

Time to Pee! by Mo Willems

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 4

If you ever get that funny feeling just follow the directions in this book and you will know exactly what to do. A fun book about going number one.

Reviewer: PC

Knock on Wood: Poems About Superstitions written by Janet S. Wong; illustrated by Julie Paschkis

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 5

Wongs seventeen poems portray our superstitions with words, while Paschkis illustrates them in vivid watercolors. Includes advice on hanging horseshoes, how to dispose of a broken mirror, and what to do with a four-leaf clover.

Reviewer: PC

Pirates! by Celia Rees; read by Jennifer Wiltsie

Grades 7 9

When Nancy learns that she is to be married to a terrible man, she and her body-slave Minerva escape from their brutal plantation lives and join a band of pirates sailing to Jamaica. Their pirate life is not carefree however for they have to elude not only the British navy, but also Nancy's spurned husband-to-be who is searching the oceans for them.

Reviewer: SH

The Amulet of Samarkand by Jonathan Stroud; read by Simon Jones

Grades 3 and older

Bartimaeus, a djinni, is conjured by Nathaniel, a talented, but under-trained, young magician's apprentice, and ordered to steal the Amulet of Smarkand from another magician. After completing his first mission for the young upstart, Bartimaeus finds himself bound to Nathaniel by spells and threats and placed in the middle of a plot to destroy the magical government of England. This first book in the Bartimaeus trilogy is masterfully read by Simon Jones and will leave the listener champing at the bit for the next two books on tape. (If you can't wait for the audiotape of book two, *The Golem's Eye*, to arrive you can always read the book.)

Reviewer: SH

Eragon by Christopher Paolini; Read by Gerard Doyle

Grades 5 and up

Eragon's life is pretty typical for a farm boy until he goes exploring one day and discovers a dragon egg. Eragon becomes the first Dragon Rider, a position of extreme importance and power, in a hundred years. When he is forced to flee the village he does so with Bram, the local story teller. Adventure and trouble awaits as Eragon learns more about his powers and the dangerous situation swirling all around him. This book is the first in a trilogy and the ending leaves readers wanting more.

Doyle's narration is among the best I have ever heard. His deep voice, evoking the finest of English performers, is remarkably versatile as each of the characters has an immediately recognizable, and appropriate, voice. Doyle's narration is highly recommended for any, especially those well read in fantasy, who want to see what all the fuss is about with this best-selling book.

Reviewer: LY

Midnight for Charlie Bone by Jenny Nimmo; read by Simon Russell Beale

Grades 4-7

When Charlie Bone develops the ability to hear the people in photographs his wicked aunts insist that he be sent to Bloor's Academy for Gifted Children. Once in the school he uncovers dark secrets and becomes entangled in a battle of good versus evil. This book will appeal to those who like the darker aspects of Harry Potter.

Reviewer: SH

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