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Bookpourri: Reviews of Books for Children

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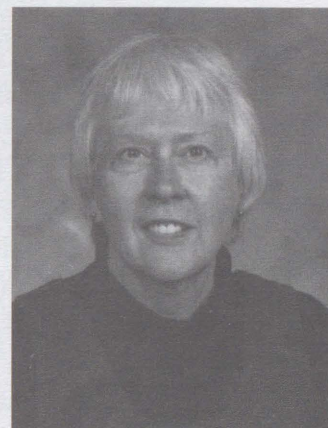
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Bookpourri: Reviews of Books for Children

Vera Milz is a second-grade teacher at Conant Elementary School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. She is a past president of the Oakland County Reading Council.

Another school year is fast coming to an end – in fact, too quickly for me! I wonder if I will get all the necessary work finished by June 15. Writing report cards, filling in cumulative files, and packing up a classroom seems overwhelming at times – especially when I would just like to concentrate on all the last minute things that I want to leave with this year's students. They have been a wonderful class, and we have had great times together. Yet there is always one more author or illustrator that they need to learn about, and time is running out. Helping these children to love books and how important it is to find that special author that will create those feelings really was illustrated vividly to me for when I came home today, I received a very special letter. One of the children who was in my class in 1981-82 is now 27, and graduating from Columbia College of Chicago with a degree in Film and Video. His mom is asking the people who have played a significant role in his life to send a graduation card, and she included me because I introduced him to the love of reading. She even has all his Bill Peet collection waiting for him to introduce these books to his own children. Twenty years have passed; will this year's children each have their own favorite author to carry them into the world of reading? I hope so.



Milz

With all my last minute pressures, my column will be an abbreviated one for this issue. I hope that at least one book will inspire you as you relax on a summer day and dream of what books you might introduce to next year's children. If you can help me with information or review copies for future issues, please write to me at 1750 Woodgate Dr., Troy, MI 48083.

Books for the Youngest Readers

Baker, Keith. *Little Green.* (Harcourt, 2001, \$16.00, ISBN 0-15-292859-6).

A little green hummingbird visits the garden of a young artist. As the bird darts from place to place, the little boy watches and then paints a picture of the zig-zagging, looping, darting flight of the busy little bird. The bright colors of the garden on this summer day are a visual delight for any reader.

Brown, Margaret Wise. *The Dirty Little Boy.* Illustrations by Steven Salerno. (Winslow, 2001, \$16.95, ISBN 1-890817-52-x).

A little boy is so dirty, he asks his mother to give him a bath. She is too busy, so she suggests that he watch how animals take a bath, and maybe he can figure out how to get clean. He goes down the road, and watches a bird, some pigs, a cat, and a

horse. However, when he tries their methods, he just gets dirtier. When he returns home, dirtier than before, it is his mother who rescues him, and shows him how little boys get clean.

Brown, Ruth. *Ten Seeds.* (Knopf, 2001, \$9.95, ISBN 0-375-80697-0).

Here is a delightful way to show young children the process of growing from a seed to a plant. When a child plants ten seeds, some are eaten by birds, animals, and insects, and some are trampled by a ball and a playful puppy. One plant survives to produce a flower with seeds for next year.

Browne, Anthony. *My Dad.* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000, \$16.00, ISBN 0-374-35101-5).

A child describes the many talents of a wonderful dad. Dad isn't afraid of anything, not even the big, bad wolf. Dad can swim like a fish and is as strong as a gorilla and as wise as an owl. Most of all, he can make his child laugh, and they love each other very much. This is a great book for a child just learning to read to share with his own dad.

Camp, Lindsay. *The Biggest Bed in the World.* Illustrations by Jonathan Langley. (HarperCollins, 1999, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-028687-3).

When Ben was a baby, he liked to sleep with his mom and dad. At first, this was fine, but as Ben grew and his family expanded, the family kept needing a bigger bed. Dad keeps making it bigger, until a disaster happens. Here is a book full of giggles and laughs, until Dad finally figures out a solution to their problem.

Faulkner, Keith. *Ten Little Monkeys: A Counting Book.* Illustrations by Jonathan Lambert. (Scholastic Cartwheel, 2001, \$9.95, ISBN 0-439-26240-2).

This clever book has a pop-up tree. Children can hang the monkeys in the tree and remove the monkeys as they read the story. The hands-on activity will make subtraction fun and meaningful for young readers.

Namioka, Lensey. *The Hungriest Boy in the World.* Illustrations by Aki Sogabe. (Holiday House, 2001, \$16.95, ISBN 0-8234-1542-2).

Jiro is a little Japanese boy who will put anything in his mouth. He tastes seaweed, sucks seashells to taste the salt, and rolls pebbles around in his mouth. One day he sees a purple blob and swallows it. The blob is a Hungry Monster, and Jiro begins eating everything in sight to satisfy the monster's appetite. It takes a whole family to solve the problem in this hilarious story of a boy with a huge appetite.

Shaefer, Lola M. *This is the Sunflower.* Illustrations by Donald Crews. (Greenwillow, 2000, \$15.95, ISBN 0-688-16413-7 TR).

One sunflower grows in a garden and is loved by the birds. As they take the seeds, they drop some to the ground, where they sprout and grow as they are warmed by the sun. The scattered seeds turn the area into a beautiful patch of sunflowers. In the back of the book the birds who visit the sunflower are identified, and facts about sunflowers are given.

Wolfe, Frances. *Where I Live.* (Tundra, 2001, \$14.95, ISBN 0-88776-529-7).

A young girl describes the seashore where she lives. It is indeed a beautiful place where sunbeams sparkle on the water, wild blueberries grow nearby, and special treasures are found on the sand and in the cool green waters. The lush illustrations make you feel like you are actually at the beach.

Yolen, Jane and Mark Teague. *How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night?* Illustrations by Mark Teague. (Scholastic Blue Sky, 2000, \$15.95, ISBN 0-590-31681-8).

Full of late-night excuses used by human children, this book explores how dinosaurs and their parents get ready for bed. Do they have tantrums or do they kiss their parents good night and say "Good Night?" You might be surprised!

For the Picture Book Connoisseur

Beeke, Jemma. *The Rickety Barn Show*. Illustrations by Lynne Chapman. (Doubleday, 2000, \$14.95, ISBN 0-385-32795-1).

All is quiet on the farm, so Jasper the cat decides to put on a show. When he makes a sign, the other animals want to get into the act. However, there is no one left to watch. Everyone is having so much fun that it doesn't matter, but readers will enjoy being the audience. There are lots of ideas on the back cover for children to put on a show of their own.

Braybrooks, Ann. *Plenty of Pockets*. Illustrations by Scott Menchin. (Harcourt, 2000, \$16.00, ISBN 0-15-202173-6).

Henry and his family live in a very messy house. They can't find anything, so Henry decides that the solution to their problem will be to put pockets on everything so they will have a proper place to keep their things. This helps, but it takes a yard sale to get the problem under control – that is, until Junior's birthday brings in a whole new load of things to put away.

Bunting, Eve. *Jin Woo*. Illustrations by Chris Soentpiet. (Clarion, 2001, \$16.00, ISBN 0-395-93872-4).

David is a boy who likes his family just as it is: Mom, Dad, and him. Now Jin Woo is a baby from Korea who is going to become a member of this family. David isn't too happy, but then he receives a special letter from the baby via his mother, and he realizes that everything is going to be all right. What a special book focusing on the feelings and questions that adoption can bring!

Burleigh, Robert. *Goal*. Illustrations by Stephen T. Johnson. (Harcourt/Silver Whistle, 2001, \$16.00, ISBN 0-15-201789-5).

This book captures the excitement of a soccer team working together for the big win of the season. The sparse text and the pastel drawings capture the fast-paced movement and feel of the game.

Dorros, Arthur. *The Fungus That Ate My School*. Illustrations by David Catrow. (Scho-lastic, 2000, \$15.95, ISBN 0-590-47704-8).

The class is studying fungus, and the children are worried about leaving their experiments over spring vacation. The teacher tells them not to worry, but when they return they find that the fungus has taken over the school. Fortunately, there is a Fungus Unit in the Sanitation Department, so the problem is solved, but not before a lot of laughs are heard from anyone reading this book.

Karas, G. Brian. *Bebe's Bad Dream*. (Greenwillow, 2000, \$15.95, ISBN 0-688-16182-0 TR).

A young girl is convinced that aliens are trying to capture her. Everyone tells her that it's just a bad dream, but Bebe just knows it is really going to happen. Finally, she gets an idea. When she puts her plan into action, it helps her to deal with her problem, although she finds that her plan doesn't solve everything. Younger siblings will appreciate Bebe's many victories.

Kroll, Steven. *Patches: Lost and Found*. Illustrations by Barry Gott. (Winslow, 2001, \$16.95, ISBN 1-890817-53-8).

Jenny is having a rough day. First, she gets an assignment to write a story, and she doesn't have any ideas. Then her guinea pig escapes, and she can't find him. She draws pictures of what might have happened to him. She tapes the pictures to her bedroom wall and realizes that all she needs to do is add the words. Here is a story that readers will enjoy for the story's worth, but may even pick up some ideas on how to write a story by themselves.

Larson, Kirby. *The Magic Kerchief*. (Holiday House, 2000, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8234-1473-6).

Griselda is a grumpy old lady who is quite lonely because of her sharp tongue. Despite her nature, she actually is quite kind, and when she befriends an old woman, she is given a kerchief that only allows her to say kind things when she speaks. Her life changes as people respond to her. The book is a testament to the power of the word.

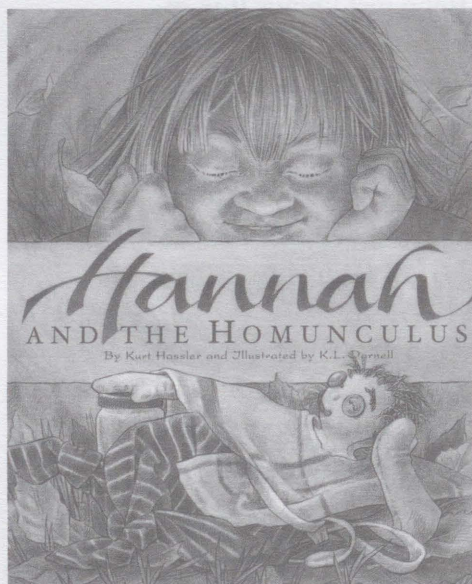
Stevens, Janet and Susan Stevens Crummel. *And the Dish Ran Away with the Spoon.* Illustrations by Janet Stevens. (Harcourt, 2001, \$17.00, ISBN 0-15-202298-8).

Every night, the dish runs away with the spoon, but always returns to be read again on the next night. One night, they don't come back, and Cow, Cat, and Little Dog set out to rescue them in time for the next reading. They check a map of nursery rhyme country and end up at the giant's beanstalk. The book is quite an adventure bound to please anyone who wonders what might have happened to the missing pair.

Wallace, Nancy Elizabeth. *A Taste of Honey.* (Winslow, 2001, \$15.95, ISBN 1-890817-51-1).

Lily Bear wants to know where honey in her jar comes from, and she keeps asking her father more questions. He traces the honey back to the market, the farm, the honeycomb, and the bees. The book has a "Honey Game" for children to play, as well as two pages of facts about honey. It is a marvelous resource.

Michigan Connections

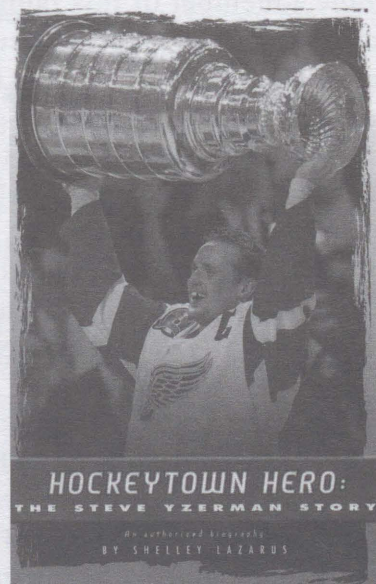


Hassler, Kurt. *Hannah and the Homunculus.* Illustrations by K.L. Darnell. (Sleeping Bear, 2001, \$15.95, ISBN 1-58536-043-0).

When Homunculus, a rag doll who wants to increase his vocabulary, steals Hannah's "No," she has a big problem. She can't refuse to take out the garbage or to eat the healthy oatmeal she hates. Stomping off into the woods, she finds the little doll's home, and tries to retrieve her "No." However, it isn't easy to do, and the two engage in a battle of words before Hannah figures out a way to regain her "NO." The author is a resident of Ann Arbor, and the illustrator resides in East Lansing.

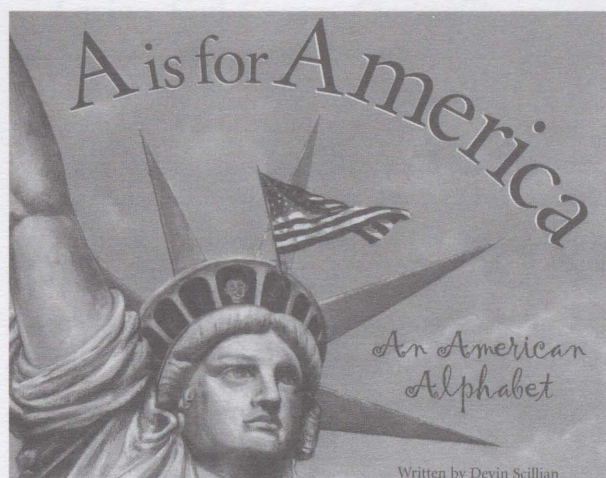
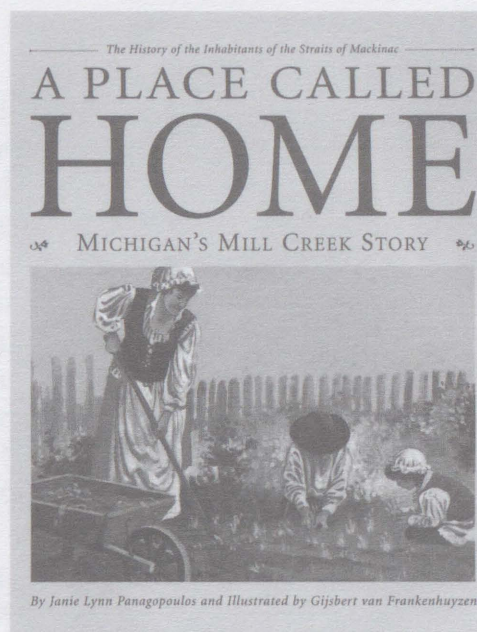
Lazarus, Shelley. *Hockeytown Hero: The Steve Yzerman Story.* (Proctor Publications, 2000, \$12.95, ISBN 1-928623-04-2)

Here is an authorized biography of the Red Wings Superstar written just for kids. It traces his life from his early hockey-playing days in Ontario to his second Stanley Cup championship in 1998. His lifetime awards and accomplishments, as well as a time line of his life, are charted in the book. Concise and fast-paced, the book is bound to be enjoyed by hockey fans. The author resides in Royal Oak.



Panagopoulos, Janie Lynn. *A Place Called Home: Michigan's Mill Creek Story.* Illustrations by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen. (Sleeping Bear, 2001, \$18.95, ISBN 1-58536-054-6).

This book blends fact and fiction. The Mill Creek sawmill was built in the 1780s to provide lumber for the British settlers in the Mackinac region. The story tells what might have happened when Robert Campbell was given permission to build the mill and what life was like for a family living in the forests near the Straits of Mackinac. The artist lives in Bath.

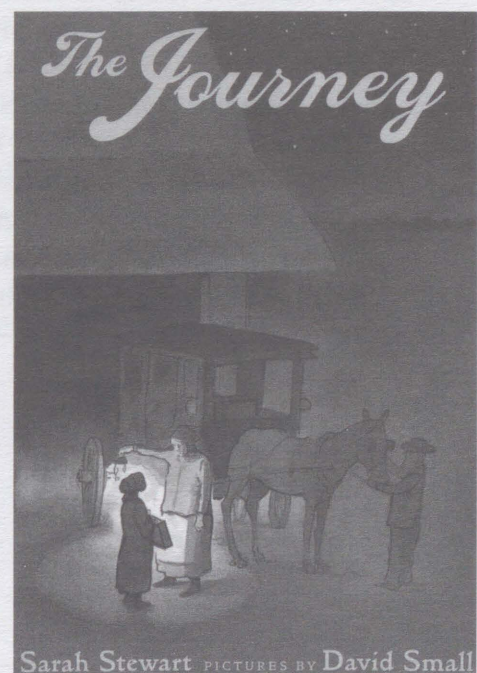


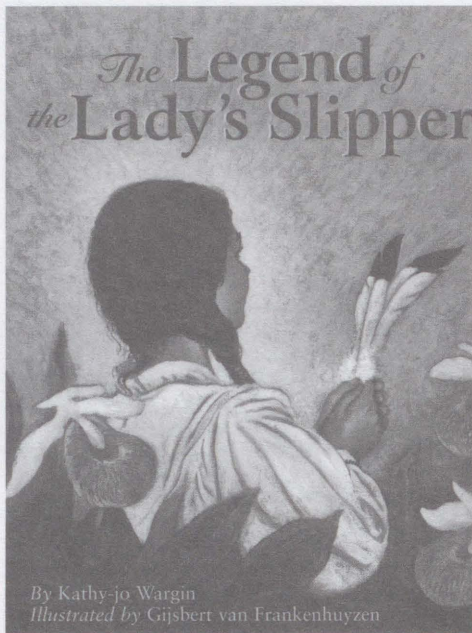
Scillian, Devin. *A is for America: An American Alphabet.* Illustrations by Pam Carroll. (Sleeping Bear, 2001, \$22.95, ISBN 1-58536-015-5).

This alphabet books tells what it means to be an American living in the United States. It looks at the past and the present, at people, places, and events. It truly is a book to make you realize just how special our country is to us. The author lives in Grosse Pointe.

Stewart, Sarah. *The Journey.* Illustrations by David Small. (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2001, \$16.00, ISBN 0-374-33905-8).

Hannah is a young Amish girl who is traveling to Chicago. It is her first trip to the big city, and she writes of her experience in diary form. The unique illustrations contrast the city scenes with what might be happening on the farm back home on the next spread of pages. The author and illustrator reside in a historic home just outside of Kalamazoo.



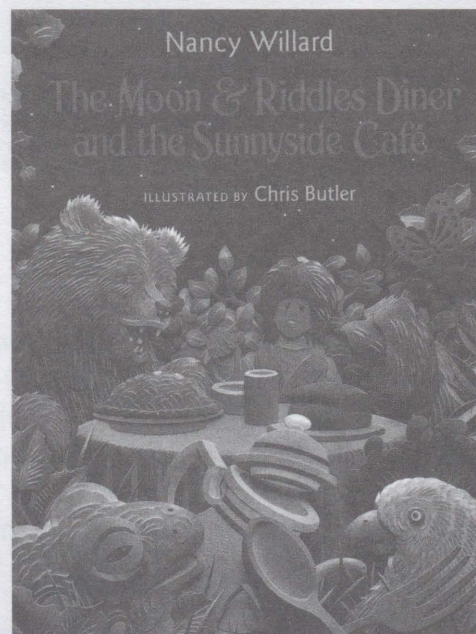


Wargin, Kathy-jo. *The Legend of the Lady's Slipper.* Illustrations by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen. (Sleeping Bear, 2001, \$17.95, ISBN 1-886947-74-0).

This retelling of the legend is based on the Ojibwe variation from the northern Great Lakes region. Running Flower finds her father with her dying mother and sets out on a journey to get a special medicine to save her. She is caught in a snowstorm and found frozen in the snow by two young braves. The entire village tries to save her, and their sorrow pierces the winter air. Spring burst forth with a thick carpet of pink and white flowers that no one had ever seen before. The author lives in northern Michigan, and the artist resides in Bath.

Willard, Nancy. *The Moon & Riddles Diner and the Sunnyside Café.* Illustrations by Chris Butler. (Harcourt, 2001, \$17.00, ISBN 0-15-201941-3).

This book is a collection of poems about Shoofly Sally and her Everything Dog who visit the restaurant in the title. The restaurant does sound like a fascinating place, with lots of good food, lots of hooting and hollering, and plenty of dancing. A set of recipes in the back of the book look like they will be fun to try. The author grew up in Ann Arbor.



For Older Readers

Banks, Lynne Reid. *Harry, the Poisonous Centipede's BIG Adventure: Another Story to make you Squirm.* Illustrations by Tony Ross. (HarperCollins, 2001, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06029139-7).

When Harry's best friend, George, disappears, Harry decides to try to find him. However, leaving his underground home is fraught with danger – especially Hoo-Mins. When Harry is captured by a young boy, he finds himself in a glass jar. Around him are other captives: dung beetles, a tarantula, and another centipede. Their escape and return home is quite an adventure, bound to please anyone interested in the world of insects and mini-beasts.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Cinderellis and the Glass Hill.* Illustrations by Mark Elliott. (HarperCollins, 2000, \$8.95, ISBN 0-06-028336-X).

In a humorous retelling of an old tale, Cinderella becomes a boy. He has two brothers who make him do all the work on the farm, but no fairy godmother. However, he is an inventor of magic powders, and he intends to use them to win the hand of Marigold, his Princess Charming. Her father has promised her hand in marriage to anyone who can climb a glass hill he has created, and retrieve three of the princesses' golden apples. All ends well in this fourth of the author's Princess Tales.

Macaulay, David. *Building Big: Companion to the PBS Series.* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000, \$30.00, ISBN 0-395-96331-1).

Bridges, tunnels, skyscrapers, domes, and dams are the subject of this fascinating book. How these structures are created, what and why certain materials were used, and how to put it together are just a few of the many questions that the author explores.

Peck, Robert Newton. *Extra Innings.* (HarperCollins, 2001, \$15.95, ISBN 0-06-028867-1).

In a devastating plane explosion, young Tate Stonemason loses his immediate family and his dreams to play major league baseball. He is left with his great-grandfather and his adopted black great-aunt. It is his great-aunt with her stories of her childhood traveling with a Depression-era Negro baseball team that gives him the courage to go on and to look forward to the new paths that his life must travel. This truly was a inspiring book that I just could not put down.

Snicket, Lemony. *The Ersatz Elevator: A Series of Unfortunate Events.* (HarperCollins, 2001, \$9.95, ISBN 0-06-440864-7).

This is the sixth book of woeful events in the lives of the Baudelaire orphans. Their best friends have been captured by Count Olaf, and he is hot on their trail. The children have been placed in the 71-bedroom penthouse of Esme Squalor, a wealthy financial adviser concerned with what is "in" and "out." The pages are filled with dire situations, darkened staircases, and an elevator that cannot be used. You have to read this book to appreciate the humor and rich use of language. It is a riot to put it mildly.