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## Bookpourri: Reviews of Books for Children

Vera E. Milz

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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.*

**A**s I write these words, August has arrived, and with the new month comes thoughts of a new school year. Our district starts back on August 25, which leaves few days to contemplate just what a new year will bring. I know that already I am filled with some apprehension as to what my new class will be like, yet there also is the feeling of hope that this will be a wonderful year. Just as these thoughts went through my mind, a new book that captures some of these feelings from a child's point-of-view arrived. It is Vera's *First Day of School* (Vera Rosenberry, Henry Holt, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8050-5936-9). Vera is looking forward to her first day of school, and finally the big day arrives. However, when she gets to the familiar playground that she has visited many times with her older sisters, it looks different and she gets frightened. All the children, except Vera, enter and, suddenly she is late for the first day of school. Sad and lonely, she walks home where an understanding mother finds her hiding in her bedroom and helps to solve her problem. As you read these words, the first day of school will be history, but perhaps this delightful picture book will help your children recall those hectic first days when school began anew. I hope you are having a great school year, and that the books in this column will be of interest to you and your students. If you have any books that you would like reviewed, please send a copy to me at 1750 Woodgate Dr., Troy, MI 48083. I would like to hear from you.



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### FOR THE PICTURE BOOK CONNOISSEUR

**Bang, Molly.** *When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry.* (Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-590-18979-4).

Sophie is having a great time playing when her sister interrupts her and takes her toy away. This is just the start of a bad time for Sophie, and she gets really, really angry. In this book, readers see what Sophie does when she is upset and how she brings her anger under control. The book is a great starting

point for a class discussion or even for individual readers to contemplate and consider their responses when the world isn't going their way. As usual, Bang's stunning illustrations add to her thought-provoking text.

**Bedard, Michael.** *Sitting Ducks.* (Putnam & Grosset, 1998, \$15.99, ISBN 0-399-22847-0).

Each day, at the Colossal Duck Factory, alligator workers hatch duck eggs on an assembly line. The baby ducks are sent to

Ducktown, where they are fattened to become the main course at local restaurants. One day, an egg rolls off the assembly line, breaks and hatches a baby duck that begins to wander about the factory. It is caught and taken home by an alligator worker who thinks he will fatten up the duck for an extra meal. However, the duck and alligator become friends, and life as these two know it changes forever. This is a delightful story debuting the artwork of a recognized poster artist.

**Calmenson**, Stephanie. *The Teeny Tiny Teacher*. Illustrations by Denis Roche. (Scholastic, 1998, \$15.95, ISBN 0-590-37123-1).

Here is an up-dated version of an old classic that will be enjoyed by young readers. A teeny tiny teacher takes her teeny tiny class on a teeny tiny walk, and they find a teeny tiny bone, which they take back for a teeny tiny science lesson. You can guess what happens back in the classroom. Readers will respond with anything but a teeny tiny laugh.

**Cuyler**, Margery. *From Here to There*. Illustrations by Yu Cha Pak. (Henry Holt, 1999, \$16.95, ISBN 0-8050-3191-X).

A little girl describes her place in her family in her home on Juniper Street and expands her description from this home to the far reaches of the universe. As her world expands, readers can explore their own place in the world. Geography and astronomy come alive in the vibrant illustrations that accompany the text.

**Emberley**, Ed, Rebecca and Michael. *Three: An Emberley Family Sketchbook*. (Little Brown, 1998, \$17.95, ISBN 0-316-23506-7).

What a treat! A family of artists comes together in this unique sketchbook format. Each artist has a section to develop his or her thoughts and artistic inclinations. Ed plays with the theme of "Three" and makes his illustrations using the computer. Rebecca writes poetry and explores the mediums of woodcuts and applique in addition to cut paper illustrations. She adds some really cool recipes. Michael shares his love of biking, and

adds his poetry to his watercolor and pastel illustrations. The book is certainly "triple" the fun for all of us.

**English**, Karen. *Nadia's Hands*. Illustrations by Jonathan Weiner. (Boyd's Mills Press, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 1-56397-668-4).

Nadia has been chosen to be the flower girl in her aunt's wedding. For the traditional Pakistani wedding, her hands are decorated with beautiful and intricate designs with a natural dye called henna. When her hands are decorated, Nadia begins to worry that her classmates will make fun of her when she returns to school after the weekend of celebration. However, at the wedding, she realizes how her hands are part of her heritage, and she begins to look forward to sharing her hands from Pakistan with her class. This is a wonderful book to open a discussion of the rich cultural heritage that each of us brings to a classroom, as well as helping children determine just what makes each family special.

**Fleischman**, Paul. *Weslandia*. Illustrations by Kevin Hawkes. (Candlewick, 1999, \$15.99, ISBN 0-7636-0006-7).

Wesley is an outcast who is picked on by the other kids. However, he is an independent thinker who inadvertently finds a way to solve his problem. As summer arrives, he decides to find a good summer project to keep himself busy. He turns over a plot of ground for a garden and opens his garden to invite the new and unknown. This is the first step as he constructs the alternative world of Weslandia. It isn't long before neighbors and classmates are trying to figure out just what Wesley is doing. This is a book for all ages to consider and think about.

**Gerstein**, Mordicai. *The Absolutely Awful Alphabet*. (Harcourt Brace, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-15-201494-2).

Something is absolutely awful about all twenty-six letters of the alphabet. They are really mean. This book presents a zany version of the alphabet that is sure to please young readers. I can remember when Chris

Van Alsburg's *The Z Was Zapped* came out, and how my second-graders loved it. The books are quite different, but I think the reaction will be similar.

**Havill, Juanita.** *Jamaica and the Substitute Teacher.* Illustrations by Anne Sibley O'Brien. (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-90503-6).

In her latest adventure, Jamaica finds a substitute teacher in her classroom. The sub is a really nice one, and Jamaica wants to please her. The day goes very well until Jamaica gets a hard word on her spelling test. She peeks at her neighbor's work and gets the word right. However, her conscience begins to bother her, and she has to make an important decision. What will the substitute teacher think if she tells her that she copied? How she handles the crisis makes you wish you had a lot of Jamaicas in your classroom.

**High, Linda Oatman.** *Barn Savers.* Illustrations by Ted Lewin. (Boyds Mills, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 1-56397-403-7).

A young boy and his dad have an important job. Instead of destroying an old barn, these two dismantle it, piece by piece, to be used in new barns and new houses. In this way, the old barn is recycled and parts of it will live on for many years. The boy discovers an ancient weather vane that he will use in his new bedroom. With so much of our past being bulldozed into oblivion, this book presents a hopeful alternative. The endpapers depict twelve aging barns and are sure to bring back memories of barns that you have lived near or driven by.

**Jonas, Ann.** *Bird Talk.* (Greenwillow, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-688-14174-9 TR).

Inspired by a friend's observation that "memory phrases" used by people studying birds were quite funny at times, Jonas began reading about this process. These phrases are used to help people hear and remember bird songs. After a year of research, she has created a book with a variety of birds and their calls. She has placed the birds in situations, such as overlooking a neighborhood barbe-

cue, getting ready for bed, or peeking into a classroom. You will enjoy the comments made by these feathered friends.

**Lasky, Kathryn.** *The Emperor's Old Clothes.* Illustrations by David Catrow. (Harcourt Brace, 1999, \$16.00, ISBN 0-15-200384-3).

When a farmer finds some discarded, but obviously royal-looking finery, he tries it on and finds that with each piece his whole persona is changing. He feels high and mighty and capable of anything. However, it is getting late and he needs to get home. If he doesn't hurry, he figures, he will get caught in the emperor's birthday parade. You know the story when he sees the emperor – the emperor is stark naked. Though the farmer realizes this, he just continues on his way home and discovers something about his finery. Young readers will enjoy the new twist on this old tale.

**Marshall, James.** *Swine Lake.* Illustrations by Maurice Sendak. (HarperCollins, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-06-205171-7).

A lean and mangy wolf finds himself in an unknown part of town when a theater marquee catches his eye. It is a theater operated by pigs presenting a ballet starring pigs. He trembles with excitement at the thought of such a scrumptious meal and decides he must get into the theater. Here's where the fun begins, and finally, the story comes to a surprising and satisfying conclusion. Lots of laughs will be heard as children read this collaboration from these two outstanding talents.

**Parillo, Tony.** *Michelangelo's Surprise.* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998, \$16.00, ISBN 0-374-34961-4).

Based on a true story told in 1494, this book tells, how after a heavy snowfall, the ruler of Florence, Italy, decides to do something special. He declares a festival will be held with a surprise for all. He sends Sandro, the youngest of the pages, to find Michelangelo. After a long search, Sandro finds the sculptor creating a great giant out of the snow. Notes

about the artist are found in the back of the book. The entire book is a great way to introduce young children to the work of this well-known artist.

**Prater, John.** *On Top of the World.* (Mondo, 1998, \$15.95, ISBN 1-57255-649-8).

On a moonlit night, four toys leave their owner and venture out for a night of fun. They go to the park, and climb to the top of the world, a giant slide. Then they have the pleasure of coming down. Young children will delight in the joyous adventure of these toys, and wonder if their toys, too, will one day have their own night of fun.

**Steig, William.** *Pete's Pizza.* (HarperCollins, 1998, \$13.95, ISBN 0-06-205157-1).

Based on a game that the author-illustrator played with his youngest daughter, this book answers the question of what to do when a child is in a bad mood. Steig suggests that you turn them into a pizza, and proceeds to give a step-by-step description of how to do it. By the time the pizza is finished, runs away, gets captured and kissed, the crisis is over, and the pizza goes out to play. This would be a great book to pair with *When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry*, which was reviewed at the beginning of this column.

## ••••• BEYOND THE PICTURE BOOK

**Bechtold, Lisze.** *Buster: The Very Shy Dog.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-85008-8).

Buster is a member of a two-dog household. The other dog in residence is a bold dog that is an ace ball-catcher, and Buster feels quite inadequate. How he discovers his own talents makes for a gentle story for beginning readers. If you have two dogs, as I do, you will realize just how much the author-illustrator knows dogs. Just like our students, dogs have their own unique personalities and talents, and each needs to be loved and appreciated for itself.

**Brisson, Pat.** *Little Sister, Big Sister.* Illustrations by Diana Cain Bluthenthal. (Henry Holt, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8050-5887-7).

This book captures the feelings that arise between two sisters. The girls boss each other around, are fiercely loyal to each other, and share things. They even make Thunder Cookies together when the little sister is frightened by a storm. The four chapters stand alone as delightful stories.

**Crews, Donald.** *Cloudy Day, Sunny Day.* (Green Light/Harcourt Brace, 1999, \$3.95, ISBN 0-15-201997-9).

Whatever the weather, it's always a good time for play. On a cloudy, gray day, you can

read, paint, or make-believe. On a sunny day, running, jumping, or flying a kite might be the perfect activity. Beginning readers will enjoy reading this volume independently.

**Ruelle, Karen Gray.** *The Thanksgiving Beast Feast.* (Holiday House, 1999, \$14.95, ISBN 0-8234-1511-2).

Harry loves to eat on Thanksgiving, but when his parents tell him that Thanksgiving is more than just food, he begins to think about what the deeper meaning of the holiday should be. As he learns about the Indian guests at the first Thanksgiving, he decides to provide a feast for the animals that live nearby. This is a book that first- and second-graders will really like.

**Warner, Gertrude Chandler.** *Benny Goes into Business: A Boxcar Children Early Reader.* Illustrations by Daniel Mark Duffy. (Albert Whitman, 1999, \$3.95, ISBN 0-8075-0637-0).

The Boxcar Children have been adapted for young readers. This particular volume has the youngest child in the family deciding to go into business like his grandfather. Unfortunately, his first attempts are not too successful. However, he keeps trying, and finally things work out.

**Wilder, Laura Ingalls.** *Laura and Mr. Edwards.* Illustrations by Renee Graef. (HarperCollins, 1999, \$13.89, ISBN 0-06-027949-4).

Fifteen or more books from the Little House series have been adapted for younger readers. This particular set is much loved by my second-graders. Many are able to handle

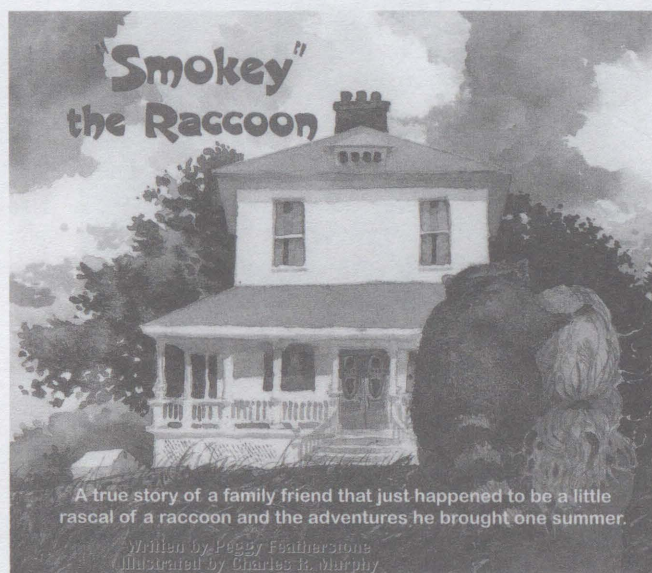
them independently, whereas the original series was usually only enjoyed though an adult reading the books. In this book, Mr. Edwards, the Ingallses' neighbor, is the featured character. He was always willing to lend the family a hand at work that needed to be done, but he was always ready for play when it was finished.



## MICHIGAN CONNECTIONS

**Featherstone, Peggy.** *"Smokey" the Raccoon.* Illustrations by Charles R. Murphy. (P.J. Publishing, 1999, \$19.95, ISBN 0-941653-59-5).

Based on a true story, this tale is about a little girl who had a wild raccoon for a pet one summer. They shared many adventures, and finally, at the summer's end, her little friend returned to the raccoon world. My second-graders enjoyed an advance copy of the story. They laughed over Smokey's antics, and I found it stimulated their memories of their own encounters with various animals. Beautiful watercolors complement the text. The author and illustrator both reside in Traverse City, Michigan.



## Sarah's Page

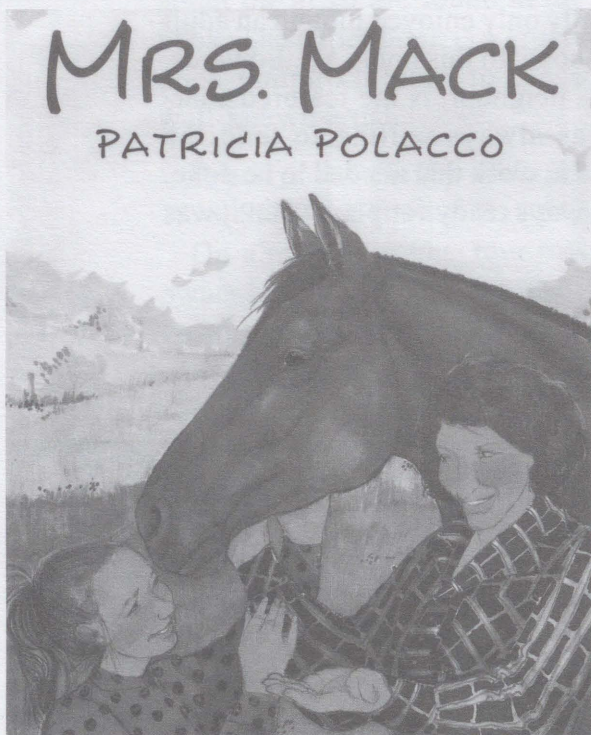
Dear Katie  
I know  
planet  
you, Mom  
look on  
were  
leaping  
me HELP  
MICHIGAN  
out of a big  
KNOW about  
It was going  
things and  
just  
doesn't  
like it. Check it out at.

[www.sarahspage.com](http://www.sarahspage.com)

Anna Murray

**Murray, Anna.** *Sarah's Page.* (Sleeping Bear Press, 1998, \$14.00, ISBN 1-886947-58-9).

Here's the perfect book for the computer age. Sarah is sent to Michigan to live with an older sister while her parents handle a series of disasters back in New York. Sarah is a typical city girl, and she now finds herself on a Michigan farm. The book is a series of emails that Sarah writes to her best friend, Katie. While Sarah is quite unhappy at the beginning of the book, she has the strength to cope with adversity and adjust to her new living situation. The book even has its own web site: [www.sarahspage.com](http://www.sarahspage.com). Katie's responses are not part of the book, but can be found on the web site. The author lives in Grass Lake, Michigan.

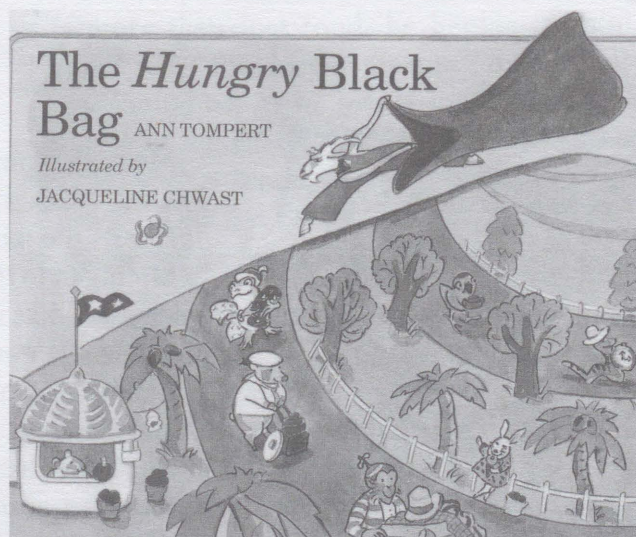


**Polacco, Patricia.** *Mrs. Mack.* (Philomel, 1998, \$16.99, ISBN 0-399-23167-6).

The author-illustrator again returns to her childhood in Michigan to create a story of a woman who knew that working with and riding horses could help young people grow in unique ways. When she was 10, Patricia was taken to a run-down stable, where she met a remarkable horsewoman who taught her how to ride and so much more. The story describes her growing skill as a rider and tells about people and horses she met during those years. Patricia Polacco now lives in Kalamazoo – not too far from the stable where she first learned to ride.

**Tompert, Ann.** *The Hungry Black Bag.* Illustrations by Jacqueline Chwast. (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-89418-2).

It's market day, and Ole Goat wants everything that everyone else has. He takes Owl's wheelbarrow and Rabbit's pots and pans, and that doesn't stop his greed. Finally, he meets his match when he tries to take Bear's hat. Your students will be laughing out loud at Ole Goat's antics – especially when he gets what he deserves at the end. The author lives in Port Huron, Michigan.



**Yee, Wong Herbert.** *Hamburger Heaven.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-87548-X).

Pinky Pig works at Hamburger Heaven, but then she hears that she might be in danger of losing her job because business is slow. She springs into action and creates an advertising campaign. Then she revamps the menu with gourmet burgers designed for each animal's taste. For example, Possum's order comes crawling with beetles, while Mole's has worms lightly fried. Pinky even earns a raise for her effort. What a rhyming delight for young readers! The author-illustrator lives in Troy, Michigan.



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**INFORMATION GALORE**

**Adler, David A.** *How Tall, How Short, How Faraway.* Illustrations by Nancy Tobin. (Holiday House, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8234-1375-6).

Here is a neat, hands-on book about measurement. Readers are given the historical roots of measurement in Egyptian and Roman times. They are encouraged to use various body parts, such as feet, hands, and fingers to try the old ways of measuring and then to use modern methods, such as the inch-pound or metric systems. The book will be a welcome addition to any math program.

**Carter, Alden R.** *Seeing Things My Way.* Photographs by Carol S. Carter. (Albert Whitman, 1998, \$14.95, ISBN 0-8075-7296-9).

Several years ago, I had a visually-handicapped child mainstreamed into my classroom. Despite his status as legally blind,

I was always amazed at what he accomplished and how he was able to move about his environment. When I saw this book, I realized it could have been written about my student. In this case, though, the book is about a second-grade girl who describes the equipment and methods that are used to help her cope with her handicap. It also captures the strong spirit and positive outlook that this child and my former student both have and provides inspiration for all who read the book.

**Jenkins, Steve.** *The Top of the World: Climbing Mount Everest.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$16.00, ISBN 0-395-94218-7).

This stunning book, illustrated with cut paper collages, gives readers the history, geography, climate, and culture of the area surrounding Mount Everest. In addition, information about the special gear needed to climb the mountain is shown, and the journey

itself – including the dangers and delights of such a trip – is described in detail. Records set, web sites to visit for further information, and a bibliography complete this fascinating book.

**Leedy, Loreen.** *Celebrate the 50 States.* (Holiday House, 1999, \$16.95, ISBN 0-8234-1431-0).

Colorful pages display maps that include the capital and major cities, the year and order of statehood, the state bird and flower, and major products of each state as well as other interesting facts. Each page has questions about the states for readers to consider, and the answers are given in the back of the book. This is a fine way to introduce primary grade children to information about the fifty states, U.S. territories, and Washington, D.C.

**Minor, Wendell.** *Grand Canyon: Exploring a Natural Wonder.* (Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1998, \$16.95, isbn 0-590-47968-7).

The Grand Canyon is one of the most beautiful places in the world. I still remember the first time I saw it. Now this author-artist takes his sketchbook, watercolors, and pencils and records his impressions of this unique place. The result is a spectacular book that will either transport you back or inspire you to plan a future trip.

**Morrison, Taylor.** *Civil War Artist.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$16.00, ISBN 0-395-91426-4).

This book is an account of how news was reported during the Civil War. Although William Forbes and *Burton's Illustrated News* are fictitious, the book is based on the work of sketch artists and illustrated newspapers of the 1800s. Artists risked their lives documenting battle scenes with their sketchbooks and pencils. The book describes how their drawings were transformed into wood engravings and finally to the printed page of a newspaper – usually about a month after the actual battle had taken place.

**Paladino, Catherine.** *One Good Apple: Growing Our Food for the Sake of the Earth.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-85009-6).

The book discusses the problems created by the use of pesticides to grow food crops and gives alternative methods of organic gardening that are being used across the United States. With a carefully researched text and accompanying photographs, the author makes a case for responsible agriculture.

**Peterson, Cris.** *Century Farm: One Hundred Years on a Family Farm.* Photographs by Alvis Uptis. (Boyd's Mills, 1999, \$16.95, ISBN 1-56397-710-9).

Five generations of Petersons have farmed this land in Wisconsin during the past century. The author uses the voice of her husband to show life on the farm where they have lived for more than 25 years. Photographs from old family albums are interspersed with pictures of the farm as it is today. It is a remarkable picture of American life in the Midwest.

**Robbins, Ken.** *Autumn Leaves.* (Scholastic, 1998, \$15.95, ISBN 0-590-29879-8).

This spectacular book is wonderful for tree and leaf identification. As the colors of fall deepen, it is a great resource for young children to use to figure out what they are looking at. The back of the book explains how and why leaves turn color.

**Rounds, Glen.** *Beaver.* (Holiday House, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8234-1440-x).

This book allows the reader to follow a beaver over a 24-hour period. Beavers sleep during the day, but make up for their inactivity during the night. They search for food, may chop down a tree or build a dam, and take time to enjoy a swim. The final pages have statements about beavers that are common beliefs held by many people, as well as a discussion on whether they are fact or fiction.

## FOLK TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Babbitt, Natalie.** *Ouch: A Tale from Grimm.* Illustrations by Fred Marcellino. (HarperCollins, 1998, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-205-66-4).

This story tells of Marco who leads a charmed life if anyone ever has. When he is born, he has a crown birthmark, and people believe he will marry a princess. When the king hears of the prediction, he begins to try to do away with him. However, Marco is able to avoid every trap, and ends up triumphant at the finish. With Marcellino's spectacular pictures to complement the text, this book may become a favorite Grimm folktale in your classroom.

**Echewa, T. Obinkaram.** *The Magic Tree: A Folktale from Nigeria.* Illustrations by E. B. Lewis. (Morrow, 1999, \$16.00, ISBN 0-688-16231-2).

Mbi is an orphan boy who lives in a Nigerian village. Everyone calls him to work, but they barely feed him. One day, a magical fruit falls from a udara tree. Mbi eats the fruit and plants the seed. The tree grows at his command and drops fruit when he sings to it. Finally, it helps him teach the villagers a lesson about sharing that they will never forget.

**Lunge-Larsen, Lise and Margi Preus.** *The Legend of the Lady Slipper.* Illustrations by Andrea Arroyo. (Houghton Mifflin, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-90512-5).

In this retelling of an Ojibwe tale, a brave little girl treks through a snowstorm to get medicine to save her family from a terrible sickness. When she loses her moccasins, her feet become swollen and bloody, but she is able to make it back to her village to give

them the medicine. In the spring, she and her brother go to look for the lost moccasins, but instead they find beautiful delicate flowers where she had once walked. The flower was called "moccasin flower" in those days, but now is known as the "lady slipper."

**Mollel, Tololwa M.** *Song Bird.* Illustrations by Rosanne Litzinger. (Clarion, 1999, \$15.00, ISBN 0-395-82908-9).

In this adaptation of a folk tale from southern Africa, a magical bird helps a young girl get back her family's cattle from a terrible monster. When the cattle first disappear, the bird magically fills the family's gourds with milk. They decide to capture the bird, but the little girl frees her and suddenly finds herself on her way to save the cattle. After a treacherous journey, the girl and the cattle are returned. The family is grateful to the song bird and honor her request to never again clear a field where the bird's eggs are. They are rewarded with prosperity and an abundant harvest.

**San Souci, Daniel.** *In the Moonlight Mist: A Korean Tale.* Illustrations by Eujin Kim Neilan. (Boyd's Mills, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 1-56397-754-0).

When a woodcutter saves the life of an enchanted deer being pursued by a hunter, he is rewarded by being given a wish. The woodcutter wants a wife to love, and the deer gives him instructions on how to get a heavenly maiden to fall in love with him and marry him. They are happy until she misses her heavenly home, and the woodcutter tries to make her happy. In the end, he is rewarded for his kindness to others.

## FOR OLDER READERS

**Brooks, Bruce.** *Vanishing*. (HarperCollins, 199, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-028236-3).

When her parents are divorced, 11-year-old Alice hopes to live with her father, but she ends up with an alcoholic mother and a stepfather who doesn't like her. When she lands in the hospital with a bout of bronchitis, she decides she just can't face going home again, and she begins to starve herself. With the help of an understanding doctor and a fellow patient, a dying boy named Rex, Alice finds the courage to face life despite its difficulty.

**Cart, Michael.** *Tomorrowland: Ten Stories About the Future*. (Scholastic, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-590-37678-0).

These stories by authors such as Lois Lowry, Jon Scieszka, James Cross Giblin, and Katherine Paterson consider what life will be like in times to come. In one story, a monk contemplates the end of the world at the beginning of the first millennium, while in another, a teenager asks the same question a thousand years later. Although a family is living on Mars in another story, two brothers find that the same jealousy that struck Cain and Abel long ago is still present. Problems like alienation, environmental ruin, and changes that threaten existence are at the centers of several stories. Together, they will give readers a lot to think about.

**Coville, Bruce.** *Odder Than Ever*. (Harcourt Brace, 1999, \$16.00, ISBN 0-15-201747-X).

Nine tales are gathered in this volume of short stories. The subjects vary, from a ghost who haunts a kitchen trying to bake the world's most wonderful biscuits, to a boy who is searching for a father who was lost at sea many years ago. A humorous fairy tale stars a stinky princess, yet explores the idea of leaving everything familiar for the sake of love. This is a book that you won't put down, and it will make you hope for another collection to be assembled sometime in the future.

(Candlewick, 1999, \$16.99, ISBN 0-7636-0407-0).

Ten well-known authors who write for children look back into their past for pivotal moments in their childhood. Jane Yolen recalls a long closet between her bedroom and her grandparents' room. It became both a happy and sad part of her memories. Paul Fleischman recalls how he coped with being the smallest boy in his class for many years and what he did about it. Each incident celebrates the resiliency of children and their capacity to hope and love.

**Graham, Paula W.** *Speaking of Journals: Children's Book Writers Talk About Their Diaries, Notebooks, and Sketchbooks*. (Boyd's Mills, 1999, \$14.95, ISBN 1-56397-741-9).

Middle and high school students will appreciate the opportunity to read the comments of more than two dozen authors when they are interviewed about the part that journals play in their writing life. Many insights are shared, and much practical advice is given. Some authors even have shared actual pages from their journals. Background information, a childhood picture, and a listing of their work are also shared. This also is a great reference for teachers of younger children who want to give children some input on ways to use journals in their lives. I know that I have marked many pages containing anecdotes or examples of journal entries that I want to show to my second-graders this fall.

**Lasky, Kathryn.** *Elizabeth I: Red Rose of the House of Tudor*. (Scholastic, 1999, \$10.95, ISBN 0-590-68484-1).

In a series of diary entries, the 11-year-old Elizabeth records a year of her life. She celebrates holidays, fights loneliness, relives her mother's beheading, fears for her own safety, and agonizes over her father's poor health. Notes in the back give further information about the life of a princess during Tudor times.

**Lowry, Lois.** *Stay! Keeper's Story.* Illustrations by True Kelley. (Dell, 1997, \$4.50, ISBN 0-440-41524-1).

Narrated by the dog of the title, this book tells about a dog born outside a restaurant and separated as a pup from his mother and siblings. He lives on the streets with a homeless man until the man dies one night. Then he gains fame and fortune when he becomes a photographer's model, and finally he gets a family to live with. Through it all though, he still hopes to be reunited with his dog family. Lowry fans will enjoy her latest hero.

**Paulsen, Gary.** *Alida's Song.* (Delacorte, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-385-32586-X).

A teenage boy is neglected by his troubled parents and facing a boring summer. Then he receives a letter from his grandmother inviting him to work on a farm where she is cooking for two elderly brothers. It becomes the summer that saves him as he experiences companionship, good food, and even learns to dance. The book is a beautiful commentary on the love between the grandmother and grandson and is a wonderful coming-of-age novel.

**Rowling, J.K.** *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.* (Scholastic, 1999, \$17.95, ISBN 0-439-06486-4).

If you haven't met Harry Potter, now is the time to do so. After the success of the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, everyone was asking for this sequel, and it was released early. The third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* will be out in September. In the *Chamber of Secrets* book, Harry is back at home for summer vacation from the Hogwarts School of Wizardry. It's a rough summer, but then as he prepares to return to school, he is warned to stay away. He doesn't listen, but then many things begin to go wrong. Here's a real page-turner that will have you anxiously awaiting the third volume in the series.

**Stewart, Jennifer J.** *If That Breathes Fire, We're Toast!* (Holiday House, 1999, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8234-1430-2).

Older elementary students will enjoy this light fantasy about a boy who is none too happy when his mom ups and moves him to Tucson from California. He thinks he is going to have a long, dull summer until he meets a neighbor girl and a fire-breathing dragon arrives on the scene. There are no dull moments from then on.