

June 1997

## Bookpourri

Vera E. Milz

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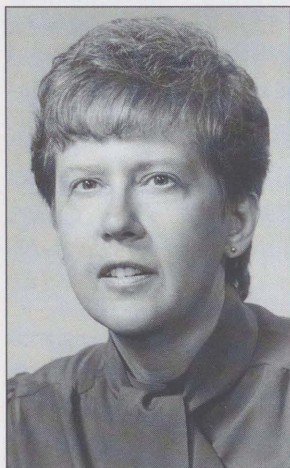
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# Book-Pourri

BOOK REVIEWS BY VERA E. MILZ



*As I look through my collection of books, I am always amazed at the diversity and creativity that authors and illustrators exhibit as they create new books for us and*

*our students. As I pick about forty books to review, I find it is very hard to deal with space limitations of the column. There are so many wonderful books that I would love to write about. I also hope that I have found books that catch your interest and meet your needs personally and for use in the classroom setting. If you have a favorite book that you can recommend to others, please tell me about it for use in a future column. Send your reviews to 1750 Woodgate Drive, Troy, Michigan 48083.*

## FOR THE YOUNGEST READERS

Alborough, Jez. *Watch Out! Big Bro's Coming!* (Candlewick Press, 1997, \$16.99, ISBN 0-7636-0130-6).

Size is definitely relative! When a mouse warns the jungle animals that "Big Bro" is coming, they all run away in terror. Since they are all so frightened, the mouse volunteers to check where

Big Bro is at, while the parrot, the frog, the chimp and the elephant hide in the bush. Of course, Big Bro is the mouse's big brother, who tells the mouse that mom wants him to return home. As they leave, the other animals show their respect for this rough, tough Big Brother. Lots of laughs, clear text, and colorful illustrations are sure to please each young reader!

De Vries, Anke. *My Elephant Can Do Almost Anything*. Paintings by Ilja Walraven. (Front Street/Lemniscaat, 1995, \$14.95, ISBN 1-886910-06-5).

In this book, the proud owner of a remarkable elephant describes all the wonderful tricks that it can perform. The elephant can balance on all kinds of things from a stool to a coffeepot. He can hang from the ceiling, walk a tightrope, change colors, and isn't afraid of the dark. The only thing he hates is being separated from his owner. In other words, here is a perfect pet and book that any child would love.

MacDonald, Amy. *Cousin Ruth's Tooth*. Illustrations by Marjorie Price-man. (Houghton Mifflin, 1996, \$14.95, ISBN 0-395-71253-X).

In this latest adventure of the Fister clan, Cousin Ruth's tooth is missing. Everyone looks in every imaginable place, but the tooth is nowhere to be found. Finally they fax the Queen for help, and receive the cryptic message, "Time heals all wounds." Of course, by now, when Ruth looks inside her mouth, a replacement has arrived, and the problem is solved. Children who have lost a



tooth of their own will especially love this treasure.

Macdonald, Suse. *Peck, Slither and Slide*. (Gulliver Books/Harcourt Brace, 1997, \$15.00, ISBN 0-15-200079-8).

This riddle book allows the reader to guess various animals according to the behavior illustrated with a word describing something about the animal's behavior. For example, when given slide along with illustrations of an icy terrain, the child is apt to guess that a penguin colony is on the next page. A glossary in the back of the book gives detailed facts about each of the animals. The entire book is a visual delight for your eyes.

Masurel, Claire. *No, No, Titus!* Illustrations by Shari Halpern. (North-South, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 1-55858-725-X).

A new puppy comes to live on a farm, and tries to figure out what he needs to do to be a good dog. He tries everything — from helping the farmer plow, to chasing mice with the cat, to laying eggs with the hens — until he gives up in frustration and takes a nap. Then he hears a fox trying to steal a chicken and he chases it away. That's when he realizes that the farm needs a good dog to keep watch over everything, and he finds just what he needs to do. Here's a neat book with places to laugh, yet a serious message about working together.

Monson, A. M. *Wanted: Best Friend*. Illustrations by Lynn Munsinger. (Dial, 1997, \$14.99, ISBN 0-8037-1483-1).

When Cat beats Mouse at checkers for the third time in a row, Mouse decides he wants to play crazy eights. However, Cat refuses and Mouse leaves in a huff. Cat decides that he needs to find a new friend, and puts an ad in the newspaper. When the possible friends turn out to be quite strange, Cat decides he wants his old friend back, and he asks him to play crazy eights with him.

The give-and-take of friendship is beautifully shown in this enjoyable text.

Numeroff, Laura. *The Chicken Sisters*. Illustrations by Sharleen Collicott. (HarperCollins, 1997, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-026679-1).

Three chicken sisters make their neighbors unhappy with the smoke from their failed baking, and the noise from their singing. When a big bad wolf moves into town, he scares all his new neighbors except for the sisters. They actually invite him into their house, but he finds the visit is a lot more than he bargained for. He decides to go and live with his mother in Atlantic City, and the neighbors find that they don't mind the eccentricities of the chicken sisters nearly as much as before. Your students will giggle at the actions of these three unique chickens!

Peters, Lisa Westberg. *October Smiled Back*. Illustrations by Ed Young. (Holt, 1996, \$14.95, ISBN 0-8050-1776-3).

This story poem personifies the months of the year, such as freezing January or frisky March, as it looks at the year though the eyes of a child seeking friendship. The gentle collages bring the year to life as the child finds joy and sadness in each passing month.

Rankin, Laura. *Merl & Jasper's Supper Caper*. (Knopf, 1997, \$16.00, ISBN 0-679-88105-0).

A little girl is drawing a picture when she is called away to dinner. Unfortunately, the stars of her picture — Merl and Jasper — are hungry, too. They decide to search through picture books which promise the best supper ever. However, bowls of porridge belong to bears, and blackbirds pop out of pies, so they go back to their own picture and create a delicious dinner. When Ann returns, she makes a yummy dessert.



Fairy tale lovers will especially enjoy this delightful culinary adventure.

White, Linda. *Too Many Pumpkins*. (Holiday House, 1996, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8234-1245-8).

Rebecca Estelle hates pumpkins because she had to eat too much pumpkin when she was a little girl. When a truck drops a pumpkin from its load, it falls and smashes in her yard. She covers the slimy mess with dirt and forgets about it. However, in the Spring, there are little sprouts all over her yard. She tries to get rid of them, but they are determined pumpkin vines which grown a tremendous amount of pumpkins. How Rebecca Estelle solves her problem makes for an engaging story just perfect for Halloween.

#### CHAPTER BOOKS FOR BEGINNERS

Duffey, Betsy. *The Camp Knock-Knock Mystery*. Illustrations by Fiona Dunbar. (Yearling/Delacorte Press, 1997, \$13.95, ISBN 0-385-32301-8).

Last year at camp, Willie was the knock-knock king. This year, Crow wants to dethrone him so he hides Willie's knock-knock book. Crow only talks in knock-knock language, as he begins to give clues so that Willie has a chance to retrieve his prized possession. The mystery is finally solved to everyone's satisfaction. This clever text will be a favorite in any primary classroom.

Goldsmith, Howard. *The Twiddle Twins' Haunted House*. Illustrations by Jack Kent. (Mondo, 1997, \$4.50, ISBN 1-57255-222-0).

One night, when the hippo twins are asleep, they are awakened by a tapping sound at the front of their house. No one is at the front door, or anywhere else. Their parents have the house checked all over, but the tapping still continues.

Finally, the mystery is solved with the discovery of a trapped woodpecker in a drainpipe. The family celebrates by having spaghetti for breakfast! Just the solution for young mystery lovers!

Rylant, Cynthia. *Mr. Putter and Tabby Row the Boat*. Illustrations by Arthur Howard. (Harcourt Brace, 1997, \$11.00, ISBN 0-15-256257-5).

On a hot summer day, Mr. Putter and Tabby invite their neighbors, Mrs. Teaberry and her dog, Zeke, to take a trip to the pond. Mrs. Teaberry packs a lunch for all of them. They have a delightfully cool day together enjoying each others' company. Unfortunately, they have to return to their hot homes, but Mrs. Teaberry has the answer to this problem. Young readers will enjoy their visit with these storybook representatives of an older generation.

Shea, George. *First Flight: The Story of Tom Tate and the Wright Brothers*. Illustrations by Don Bolognese.

This book tells the behind-the-scenes story of Tom Tate, who was the second person to fly in the Wrights' kite glider. He was befriended by the two brothers who brought their flying machine to his home town of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in 1900. He later witnessed the first time that a machine controlled by a human being flew under its own power in 1903. This fictionalized account of those exciting days will be enjoyed by children of today.

Williams, Suzanne. *Emily at School*. Illustrations by Abby Carter. (Hyperion, 1996, \$13.95, ISBN 0-7868-0149-2).

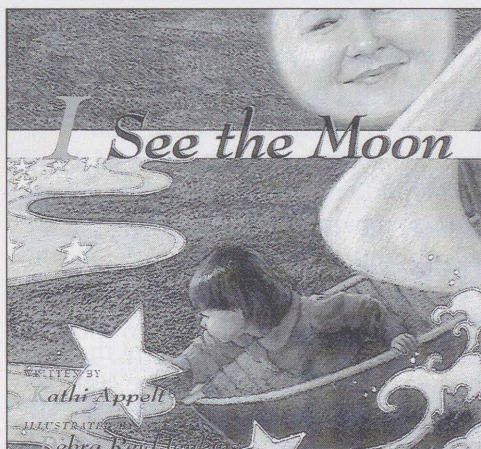
Emily happily enters second grade, only to discover that it may not be as easy as she thought it would be. There is a new boy who keeps following her around, and then she is the only person in her class who doesn't get a star on her math test. Then her best friend wants to



play with the new boy. Lots of problems, but Emily comes up with her own unique solutions. Second graders entering this new grade will love this book, but so will other primary grade students.

## MICHIGAN CONNECTIONS

Appelt, Kathi. *I See The Moon*. Illustrations by Debra Reid Jenkins. (Eerdmans, 1997, \$15.00, ISBN 0-8028-5118-5).



The traditional children's rhyme is combined in this story poem which tells of a young girl dreaming of being alone at sea in a tiny boat where she is comforted by God's love and presence. She feels lost and abandoned until she sees the gentle moon, the stars and at last the sun as she returns to shore. Beautiful paintings accented in gold leaf by a Lowell, Michigan, artist accompany the poignant text.

Curtis, Rebecca S. *Charlotte Avery on Isle Royale*. (Midwest Traditions, 1997, \$6.95, ISBN 1-883953-13-8).

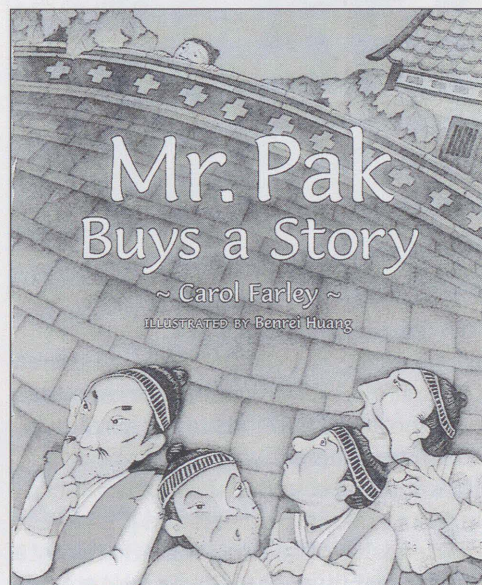
This paperback for middle-grade readers tells of a young girl who goes to live with her family for a year at an island mining operation on Lake Superior near the Canadian border. Here she meets Claire and her storytelling grandmother who tell her about the island's

history and natural beauty. Many adventures follow as she meets Indians, miners, and sailors during the 1870's period of our state's history. The native Michigan author is an elementary school teacher who based her fictional account on diaries of early settlers in the area.

Davis, Robert. *Plutonium Murders*. (Horizon Press, 1997, \$24.95, ISBN 1-890248-00-2).

This adult novel is a fast-paced thriller about a doctor who is suddenly thrust into an evil plot to hold the world hostage through the threat of plutonium poisoning. Poisoned himself, he races around the world looking for an anecdote to save himself and the world. This is a book that will keep you spinning from one twist to another. The author is from Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Farley, Carol. *Mr. Pak Buys a Story*. Illustrations by Benrei Huang. (Whitman, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8075-5178-3).

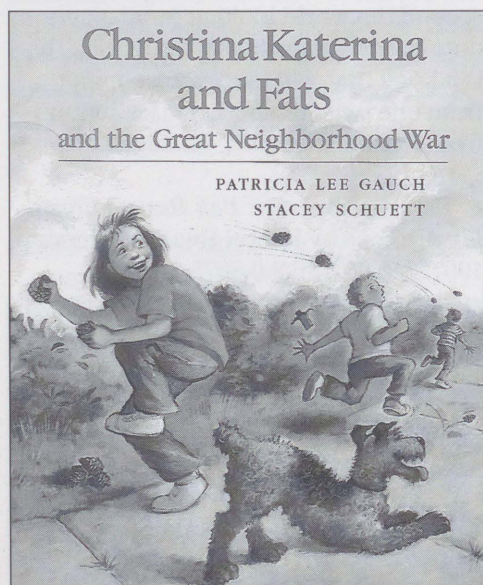


In the olden days, when storytellers wandered from village to village, people would pay them to tell stories. A wealthy couple living in an isolated area decide they want a story, so they send their ser-



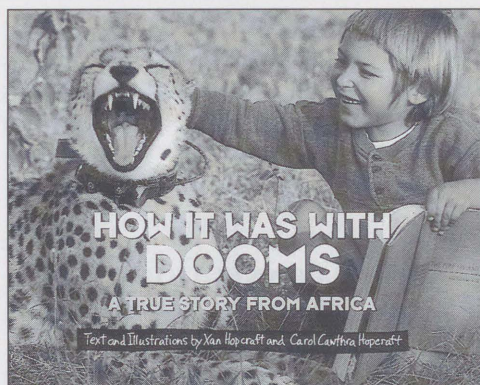
vant to "buy" one from a traveling storyteller. He encounters a thief who sells him a strange story. When he returns, he retells it, and the three all wonder about the story. However, many months later, the same silly story is central in preventing a robbery at the home. The retelling of this Korean folktale is by an author who lived for many years in Korea, but has moved to a home in Michigan.

Gauch, Patricia Lee. *Christina Katerina and Fats and the Great Neighborhood War*. Illustrations by Stacey Schuett. (Putnam, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 0-399-22651-6).



Christina Katerina and Fats are best friends except when they don't like each other at all. When Tommy moves in the neighborhood and Fats takes his side in a dispute, a neighborhood war begins. How it all turns out makes for an engaging story about the perils and pleasures of friendship. The story was written by a Michigan native who now is a New York book editor, as well as a wonderful author.

Hopcraft, Xan and Carol Cawthra. *How It Was With Dooms: A True Story from Africa*. Paintings by Xan Hopcraft.



Photographs by Carol Cawthra Hopcraft. (McElderry/Simon & Schuster, 1997, \$19.95, ISBN 0-689-81091-1).

Dooms was a cheetah cub who became a much-loved member of the Hopcraft family at their ranch in Kenya, Africa. Separated from its mother at about three weeks old, the cheetah was cared for by the family in its' home for about three months. Then it was allowed to roam free, but it always kept their home as his own territory. The cheetah lived there for seven years, when he unexpectedly took sick and died shortly thereafter. The book was written as a memorial to their happy times together. Carol Cawthra Hopcraft was born in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. In 1977, she moved to Africa to pursue a career as a wildlife photographer.

## FULL OF INFORMATION

Arnold, Katya with Sam Swope. *Katya's Book of Mushrooms*. Illustrations by Katya Arnold. (Holt, 1997, \$16.95, ISBN 0-8050-4136-2).

Everything you might want to know about mushrooms is found in this introduction to the world of mushrooms. From where they are found, how they grow and reproduce, their names, how to identify them, their dangers, and how to grow your own, there is something for everyone in this comprehensive book. A



glossary and index add to the usefulness of this book.

George, Jean Craighead. *Look to the North: A Wolf Pup Diary*. Illustrations by Lucia Washburn. (HarperCollins, 1997, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-023641-8).

The story of three Alaskan wolf pups is told in this beautifully illustrated text — from the moment they open their eyes until they ready to join the hunt at about 11 months of age. Readers in the lower 48 states are given reminders over each entry, as to what is happening in their area as they “look to the north” to see the pups growing.

Gibbons, Gail. *The Honey Makers*. (Morrow, 1997, \$16.00, ISBN 0-688-11386-9 TR).

Step by step, the author tells the story of how honey is made and processed — from bee to beekeeper. When two beekeepers place a hive on a hill near their home, bees move in. A detailed description is given of the activity within the hive, as well as the travels of the bees away from the hive to gather nectar. In July and August, the beekeepers go to work gathering honey, and processing it for people to eat. A diary in the back lays out a year in the lives of the bees and their keepers, and unusual facts fill the final page of this fascinating book.

Kramer, Stephen. *Eye of the Storm: Chasing Storms with Warren Faidley*. Photographs by Warren Faidley. (Putnam, 1997, \$18.95, ISBN 0-399-23029-7).

Some of nature's most dramatic moments are captured within the pages of this book. Photographs of lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes fill the pages, as well as an explanation of how these storms are photographed. A diary of May 5, 1993 details how seven tornadoes in that one day were photographed. Safety tips are given, as well as precautions about the dangers of chasing storms.

You will come away from this book with a new appreciation of the danger and the beauty of the violent weather on our earth.

Krupinski, Loretta. *Into the Woods: A Woodland Scrapbook*. (HarperCollins, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 0-06-026443-8).

Fascinating woodland facts, poems, Native American folktales, and nature lore fill the pages of this book about the forest. Animals, their tracks, and the plants of the woods are detailed in both word and pictures. Young readers will want to head into the woods near their home to further explore the world described in this lovely text.

## FOLKTALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Bateman, Teresa. *The Ring of Truth; An Original Irish Tale*. Illustrations by Omar Rayyan. (Holiday House, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8234-1255-5).

Patrick O'Kelley is always telling wild stories or outrageous lies, and he even boasts that he can “spout more blarney than the king of leprechauns himself.” The king, hearing of the boast, decides to teach him a lesson, and he tricks Patrick into accepting a magic ring that compels the wearer to tell the truth. When Patrick tells of their encounter, no one believes him and he wins a blarney contest — despite telling the truth. Is truth really stranger than fiction??

Grimm, Jacob & Wilhelm. *Rapunzel*. Illustrations by Maja Dusikova. Translated by Anthea Bell. (North-South, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 1-55858-684-9).

This lush retelling of an old favorite captures all the romance and beauty of the old German tale. When Rapunzel is carried off by a witch in payment for the plants taken by her father, she is put into a tower in the middle of the forest. When



a prince finds her, danger follows until the young lovers are reunited once again. This beautiful book certainly deserves a visit from your students when you are enjoying the world of fairy tales.

Hickox, Rebecca. *Zorro and Quwi: Tales of Trickster Guinea Pig*. Illustrations by Kim Howard. (Doubleday, 1997, \$14.95, ISBN 0-385-32122-8).

Night after night, Zorro the fox tries to catch Quwi the guinea pig for his dinner. However, the cunning little pig has a lot of tricks up his sleeve, and each night makes a fool of the fox. Finally, he plays a trick that causes the fox to run to the other side of the forest, and to even give up trying to catch guinea pigs. This is a retelling of a Peruvian folktale based on trickster tales from the Andes Mountain area.

Mollet, Tololwa M. *Ananse's Feast: An Ashanti Tale*. Illustrations by Andrew Glass. (Clarion, 1997, \$14.95, ISBN 0-395-67402-6).

When Ananse the spider prepares a feast, he wants to eat it all by himself. However, a hungry friend, Akye the turtle, comes by and he feels compelled to invite him in. Then he figures a sneaky way to not give his friend anything to eat! Poor Akye leaves as hungry as when he came, but the story doesn't end here. Instead, Akye shows that he has a trick or two of his own. Lots of laughs, but lots of food for thought and discussion. Would sharing have been a better solution for both?

Yep, Laurence. *The Khan's Daughter: A Mongolian Folktale*. Illustrations by Jean and Mou-sien Tseng. (Scholastic, 1997, \$16.95, ISBN 0-590-48389-7).

A poor shepherd boy is told that one day he will become rich and marry the Khan's daughter. To do this, he must carry out three harsh tasks. He accomplishes two of them, but is defeated by

the mighty Bagatur — really the Khan's daughter in disguise. When he admits his defeat and agrees to treat her as an equal, he passes the last test, and they are married. Here is another strong female character in a traditional folktale.

## OUTER SPACE IN FACT AND FICTION

Agee, Jon. *Dmitri the Astronaut*. (HarperCollins, 1996, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-205074-5).

When Dmitri returns to Earth, he has been on the moon so long that people have forgotten who he is. He wanders around until he realizes that space exploration has moved on to new areas like Jupiter and Pluto. He pitches the rocks that he has collected into a garbage can without realizing that he has brought a moon creature with him. Lulu is found and becomes an overnight sensation. She draws pictures of her astronaut friend, although no one can figure out what they mean. Finally the two are reunited, and Dmitri is remembered once again.

Getz, David. *Floating Home*. Illustrations by Michael Rex. (Holt, 1997, \$15.95, ISBN 0-8050-4497-3).

Eight-year-old Maxine becomes the world's youngest astronaut. Readers join her as she gets dressed for take-off. She finds that this is no easy task as she puts the required clothing on. Then there is the excitement of countdown and lift-off, and finally, Maxine is ready to begin her task of drawing Earth from outer space. What an adventure!

Jones, Thomas D. and June English. *Mission: Earth — Voyage to the Home Planet*. (Scholastic, 1996, \$16.95, ISBN 0-590-48571-7).

Astronaut Thomas Jones gives a detailed description of his 22 days in



orbit soaring 135 miles above the earth on the 1994 Space Radar Lab mission in the spaceship Endeavour. Science writer June English tracks the launch and mission from home back on Earth. Together they describe the ecological health of the Earth, and help us to understand the fragile health of our planet. Amazing photographs from the mission are found throughout the book.

Lauber, Patricia. *You're Aboard Spaceship Earth*. Illustrations by Holly Keller. (HarperCollins, 1996, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-024407-0).

Our Earth is a spaceship hurtling through space at 67,000 miles per hour. It is the perfect spaceship with everything on board that we need to survive — food, water, and air. How nature recycles these precious resources is explained in this "Let's-Read-and-Find-Out" science book for young readers. This series of books continues its tradition of excellence in this outstanding edition.

Scagell, Robin. *Space Explained: A Beginner's Guide to the Universe*. (Holt, 1996, \$18.95, ISBN 0-8050-4872-3).

Using photographs, drawings, and text, this book takes you on a voyage through space — from when the Universe was created, visits to the planets and stars, the Milky Way and other galaxies, to a look at what might happen in the future. A glossary and index add to the usefulness of this fascinating text.

## FOR OLDER READERS

Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. (HarperCollins, 1997, \$14.95, ISBN 0-06-027510-3 TR).

Spunky and witty Ella, the daughter of a noblewoman who shares wild rides down a banister with her child and an absent father, is cursed by a fairy at birth by being given the gift of obedi-

ence. She cannot disobey an order. When her mother dies and her father remarries, her stepsisters discover the curse and make her life miserable. There is a Prince, but Ella's "gift" stands between them. She must find a way for the spell to be broken before there can be a happy ending. Yes, here is a chapter book telling of the Cinderella story, but refreshingly new for middle grade students.

Richler, Mordecai. *Jacob Two-Two's First Spy Case*. Illustrations by Michael Chesworth. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995, \$16.00, ISBN 0-374-33659-8).

Jacob Two-Two is the youngest member of his family, and he has to say everything twice in order to be heard. Usually though he can handle any problem that comes his way. However, when Mr. I. M. Greedyguts takes over as headmaster at his school and hires Perfectly Loathsome Leo Louse as the school cook, he knows he needs help! Everyone ignores him and thinks he is just complaining too much. Fortunately, Mr. Dingiebat, his new mysterious neighbor, takes him seriously and offers to help. How they expose the evildoers, and save the school makes for a hilarious adventure in this latest book in this series. Fans of Matilda will especially enjoy this book.

Tolan, Stephanie S. *Welcome to the Ark*. (Morrow, 1996, \$15.00, ISBN 0-688-13724-5 RTE).

Four brilliant young misfits are unable to cope with a society that regards them as different. They come together in a group home program they call the Ark where they discover they are not alone. They begin to channel the power of their minds to try to stop the violence engulfing our world, although they are beset by many problems. This is truly one of the most gripping, yet inspiring, books that I have read in the past



few years! Teachers will find plenty of things to think about in regards to the brightest of the students that pass through our classrooms.

## PROFESSIONAL READING

Horning, Kathleen T. *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books*. (HarperTrophy, 1997, \$12.95, ISBN 0-06-446167-X).

A behind-the-scenes look at the world of children's books is found within this book. It explains the process of creating a book from manuscript to finished copy, a look at six different genres of children's books, and a good explanation of how to critically evaluate and review children's books. Many examples of fine books for children are cited. The entire volume is quite useful in determining what books are suitable for your classroom setting.

Huck, Charlotte S., Susan Hepler, Janet Hickman, and Barbara Z. Kiefer. *Children's Literature in the Elementary School: Sixth Edition*. (Brown & Benchmark, 1997, \$59.47, ISBN 0-697-27960-X).

Every school in the United States should have a copy of this comprehensive text available for teachers to use as they bring children's literature into their

classrooms. It contains theory, current research, book title recommendations, accounts of real teachers who have used many of the cited books, and guidelines for evaluation. This latest edition is filled with a wealth of information!

Routman, Regie. *Literacy at the Crossroads: Crucial Talk About Reading, Writing, and Other Teaching Dilemmas*. (Heinemann, 1996, \$19.50, ISBN 0-435-07210-2).

Schools and educational practices are constantly under attack in many areas. The author maintains that teachers cannot sit back as this criticism grows stronger. In this book, she clarifies issues about reading and writing, and offers suggestions on how to make a difference in dealing with the public. Appendices in the back of the book provide practical tips for handouts to parents and others. As usual, this book reflects the fact that the author is a classroom teacher facing the problems daily that she so eloquently is working on to solve.

*Dr. Vera E. 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.*



# MICHIGAN READING ASSOCIATION

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

*Your address determines your voting region.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

### I am a member of:

- International Reading Association ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Local Reading Council ☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes," name of Local Council is: \_\_\_\_\_

### Check one:

- ☐ Regular Member ..... \$25.00
- ☐ Parent/Non-Educator ..... \$7.50
- ☐ Full-Time Undergraduate Student ..... \$8.00

### Check one:

- ☐ New Member
- ☐ Renewal

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Card Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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