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■ Living the Story to Give It Life: Profile of Peggy King Anderson

■ Lindisfarne Legacy: the Writing of David Adams

■ Get published: earn prize money

■ Pets: Check It Out: Home Schoolers Use Their Public Library

■ The Challenging Child: Book Nook

■ Reading the Right Stuff: Choosing Kids to Choose Wisely

■ Big Game Hunting: Using Games to Snare Young Writers
Dear Readers,

As I spent time this fall speaking and exhibiting at conferences, many times fellow librarians came to ask advice about automating their libraries. I also receive many calls about this difficult task. These questions take me back to my first experiences with automation, when choices were few and most of us did not know what were the important questions to ask, questions that have been since developed through our experiences. Today the multitude of choices can be confusing, especially to those who are just beginning to look for library automated systems. While I do not pretend to be an expert on this subject, I do have the experience of automating several libraries, and I believe that there are several basic questions which need answering before you choose a library automation system.

Before you go out looking for computer software, take time to reflect first on your immediate needs and possible future needs. Talk with others who use your library: teachers, students (often they know more than we about what computers can do for us!), administration, librarians in other institutions. Talk with librarians who have automated their libraries. Ask all of these what they would like to see the library computer do for them. Don’t, in this initial stage, limit yourself to what you can afford now. As long as you are dreaming, dream big! Consider these possible needs:

1. Will you use your computer for circulation, checking materials in and out?
2. Will library users be able to use a computer or computers to look up information?
3. What information will they access: the “card catalog”? reference materials on CD-ROM? a magazine index? other libraries? the Internet?
4. How will you start? With a full system? Or will you start small, but plan ahead for adding on? How many computers do you need now? In the future?
5. Do you plan to enter all library records yourself, use volunteers, buy records on disc, ask someone else to enter your materials, buy software which will enable you to pick up records off a CD-ROM? How will you get student records into your program: from your office database? original entry by you? (Note: the standard for library records is the MARC record; another is the MICROLIF record. Be sure you buy software that will allow you to import MARC or MICROLIF records directly into your catalog. Some companies have less expensive software that will import such records now, but also allow for an add-on product later which will tie into a CD-ROM with a lookup/add-a-record aspect that will save you hours of time.)
6. Will you network your library database into other areas of the library, school, or church?
7. How will you fund this project?

After you have thoughtfully considered these and other questions which come up during your investigation, you are ready to begin to search for the right software to meet your needs. There are now hundreds of library programs, many of which will meet your needs, so spend some time in your local library searching for reviews and articles about library software. Find what each program requires in the way of equipment: memore, RAM, etc. When you have a list of possibilities, call or write for information and sample disks. Read all about each one, try the sample, ask others who have used the program about ease of setup, ease of use, technology support quality from the producer, capability of expansion. Then make a plan, going from what you can afford now to what you would like to have ideally in the future. Pray about it! And submit it to others for advice and approval.

Careful and thoughtful planning now will help you buy something now that will meet your needs fully, now and in the future.

Nancy L. Hesch

In Christ’s love,

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The purpose of the *Christian Library Journal* is to provide readers with reviews of library materials from a Christian point of view. About 250 books, cassette tapes, and videos from both Christian and secular publishers are reviewed each issue. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor of the *Christian Library Journal*.

Nancy Hesch Publisher  
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I was intrigued recently with the title of a new book. *The Challenging Child* by Dr. Stanley Greenspan brought back memories of certain children I had taught.

We’ve all had them in our classes, the youngsters who don’t march to the same drum that most of the rest of the students do. For some reason or other they seem to be wired up differently. They may overreact to any stimulation, acting out frustrations in the classroom or on the playground. They may create chaos wherever they go or else retreat into a private little world that walls you or anyone else out. You may have applied all your skills and understanding to this child, yet he or she defies any simple solution. You want every pupil in your classroom to achieve at his or her potential, yet it seems impossible to get through to this child, nothing works.

According to Dr. Greenspan, research indicates children come into the world with individual differences in physiological and neurological make-up. Children vary considerably in how they perceive the world around them. Contrary to the belief that all of us experience basic sensations similarly, it has been found that children vary in how they perceive sight, sound, touch, odors, and movement patterns. A child may be overly sensitive and overreactive or undersensitive and underreactive to a given sense.

Is a child who reacts differently to his world because of his physiological make-up doomed to a life of frustration or failure?

“No not,” states Dr. Greenspan, “The significant adults in that child’s world can make a difference in how a child lives out his life. Both nature and nurture make a difference.”

I can hear you saying, “But I don’t have time to figure out and deal with each child’s problems!” We are overloaded and stretched beyond our limits so
much of the time, but if we can learn to evaluate and find some helpful approaches to these challenging children we will simplify our efforts in the classroom and see children learning positively.

Dr. Greenspan’s book is directed mainly to parents of challenging children, but his analysis and program for action apply to anyone working with children. He identifies five main types of challenging children and then offers approaches to understanding and dealing with these particular children.

I think his understandings and approaches are something most of us learn with time and experience. His work simply makes the job easier.

Dr. Greenspan advocates patience with these children, but maintains that, “Patience doesn’t mean you let a child avoid challenges. It means that you find creative, enjoyable ways to challenge a child to practice what is hard.”

I can think of numerous children that needed different approaches to learning because of the ways they reacted. There was first grader Richard who just couldn’t shut out the stimulation of the other children. When it came time to work or do seat work he couldn’t concentrate and was frequently on his feet checking on the other children. One solution for Richard was to create an office out of a refrigerator box with one side removed and a desk in it. Richard’s office sat in a quiet corner and when it came time for him to do his work he would take books and paper to his own special workplace. He was able to complete tasks away from all the other distractions. As the year progressed he needed his “office” less frequently. In the process his confidence grew as he succeeded in his work.

Then there was Sarah who was painfully shy and sensitive. When it came time to read aloud in the reading group she couldn’t muster the courage to open her mouth. She would miserably shake her head no. Neither gentle persuasion or firm insistence could budge her from her immobilizing fear.

From observing Sarah and talking with her mother, I knew she could read. Finally I let her go off in a quiet corner with another little girl who read well and they read to each other. I kept an eye on them and noted when she began to loosen up and interact with her partner as they shared stories together. Then I added another child to the twosome and in a few days Sarah was able to confidently rejoin the larger reading group.

Sixth grader John was dyslexic and had long ago given up on spelling. Chris could never get himself organized. He was a walking disaster, a trail of broken pencils and wadded up paper littered the area around his desk. For both of these boys the typical classroom speller only spelled one more failure.

I paired them together, took away the spelling books and launched them on their own spelling program. Words were presented individually on flash cards with vowels written in red. Families of words with similar structure were introduced so they could recognize similarities. We started out with simple words they could master easily and gradually increased the difficulty. They worked together, drilling each other and affirming one another when they succeeded. They both loved to draw airplanes and were rewarded with opportunities to do so when they achieved. They learned how to recognize their problems and compensate for them.

Dr. Greenspan says that, “If you create pressure and tension around a child’s challenges, he may become more unsure of himself. If you inspire a child with enjoyable challenges and a patient approach you may see cooperation and mastery. If you want a child to overcome challenges you need to be supportive, patient and help the child practice, practice, practice.”

As we are faced with the challenge of these special children who don’t march to everyone else’s drum, let us be creative and caring. Remember Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein were challenging children. They didn’t fit the mold and had difficulty in the classroom. Each of our students is created uniquely. We can take our place in their lives helping them to someday become the person God designed them to be.
Sometimes all the coaxing and rewarding in the world doesn’t do it. Some kids get so turned off to writing that no assignment—no matter how creative—can lure them into putting words down on paper. So how about a little slight-of-hand to turn drudgery into fun? Make writing a big adventure by making it a game.

Start by making a difficult situation a little easier to bear. Riding in the car can be a torture session for kids and adults alike (does the phrase, “S/he’s touching me!” ring a bell?). Parents can head this off by combining the nurture of writing skills with a new family tradition: start playing an oral story-telling game in the car.

To grease the proverbial wheels, the parent should start the ball rolling. Begin with the time-honored phrase, “Once upon a time…” That phrase brings magic into your car and cues the kids for what’s coming next. Tell a tale that brings its heroes up to a cliff and lets them hang—then turn the story over to the next person in line. He or she resolves that first adventure and starts the protagonists off on another. Then the next person takes over. Repeat this until the trip is over or everyone is exhausted by the creative effort.

Do your children have pets? Try using one or all in the story line. My children’s pet rats figured largely into our oral stories. Zipper, Flash, Pudgy, and Nudgy went on many naughty little adventures throughout their two-year lifespan. Together, they escaped their cages and stole Easter candy, went on an involved hunt for each other and discovered the joys of tickling their young master and mistress as the humans slept. The tales make fond memories even now.

Another fun family writing game is “Fictionary.” There are several ways to play. You can break into teams if there are enough players. One team leaves the room while the other chooses an obscure word from the dictionary. Then each person writes a definition for that word, trying to imitate the Webster prose style. Add the real definition (or one of them) to the list and call the other team back into the room. It’s their job to figure out which is the real definition.

Fictionary is easy to play as a one-on-one game, too. Once again, the “guesser” leaves the room while the “definer” chooses a word and writes one or more definitions for it, listing them along with the real meaning. The “guesser” attempts to identify the correct definition.

Scrabble has been around for decades, and is a favorite with my children. But the letter tiles can do more than just make words—they can also tell a story. Stretch out on the floor with your child and encourage him to create a sentence out of the tiles. Copy it down on a piece of paper. Then you take a turn, producing a sentence that adds to what your child has already written. Pretty soon you’ll have written a tale together. Be sure to keep the story in a safe place for memory’s sake. Store it in the game box or in your child’s baby book.

If you frequent high-quality children’s toy stores, you may have seen the magnetic poetry kit that’s become very popular right now. All it consists of is a series of magnetized words which the player rearranges to “write” poetry. Why not create your own set with your child? It’s easy to do.

With a pile of old magazines and/or newspapers and a pair of scissors at your side, search for exotic and interesting words from headlines and call-outs (the type size is larger and easier to read). Don’t forget to cut out some mundane words like “is” and “the.” When you’ve cut out enough (about fifty or
so), magnetize them by cutting small pieces from strip of magnet tape (available at dime stores and craft shops) and press one piece to the back of each word. Another option is to glue the words to tagboard before you magnetize them. This will lengthen their lives. Use a large metal tray or even your refrigerator to create a “poem for the day” with your child.

It doesn’t have to be grammatically perfect (that will probably be impossible, given the word limitations), but it can be beautiful or funny or sad. And it will be unique. Another twist on this game is to cut out interesting photos, drawings, and graphics (in the same general size range), magnetize them with the magnet tape, and use them to make a rebus story. This little variation can make the game fun for younger kids to play, too. And it can make for some silly stories!

I first learned of this next game while at a homeschooling conference in Wisconsin. I thought it so charming that I had to include it here. It’s similar to the above game in that it involves piles of magazines and lots of cutting. However, instead of searching for words, the game maker must search for graphic designs and unusual little illustrations. With spray-on glue, attach each picture to a piece of tagboard. When the tagboard is full of pictures, laminate it by using a piece of clear contact paper. Then cut out each illustration.

These game “tiles” then go into a box (have your child decorate an inexpensive wooden Shaker box purchased at a craft store). When it’s time to play, gather the family ‘round and have the first person choose a tile. She must tell a bit of a story based on the picture she chose. Then the next person chooses a tile. He adds to the story, basing his new developments on his tile’s picture. Continue on as long or short as you want!

One of the wonderful things about this game is that it is never the same twice in a row. Not only is it easy to continually add new tiles as you run across interesting graphics, but it’s also easy to "correct" the game by adding needed tiles. And the game is simple to tailor to a family’s interests (eg, sports, animals, fairy tales, dinosaurs, etc.).

For most children, the sense of being an important and supported part of a family team gives them the extra "oomph” they need to succeed in anything. These games provide that impetus. But they also provide something extra--hands-on experience in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Telling stories in the car provides children with a link to a tradition as old as man. Using Scrabble tiles to write sentences not only incorporates spelling skills, but it also gives children a tactile experience with an inherently inner activity. For many children, that physical doing greatly aids the learning process. Fictionary helps kids gain familiarity with the dictionary. The magnetic poetry game helps ease young poets and writers into the parts of language, fitting them together to form a particular meaning. And the picture tile activity is a truly creative game that really does teach storytelling skills while drawing a family together.

Writing doesn’t have to be a tense activity lived out with a pencil and eraser or in front of a keyboard. By using games, writing can actually become fun!

Next time: Beyond the Theme

Commercial Games That Promote Writing Skills

The following is a partial list of the many commercially available games, crafts and software that improve or promote writing skills for eager young players.

Games and Crafts:
1. Scrabble or Scrabble Junior (S & R Games)
2. Boggle or Boggle Junior
3. Magnetic Poetry Kit or Magnetic Poetry For Kids
4. Fun With Hieroglyphics (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
5. Stamp A-Story Kits
6. Wordsters
7. Creative Storytelling (Creativity for Kids)
8. Mad Labs by Roger Price and Leonard Stern
9. The Imagine It Book Kit
10. Young Storyteller; Young Reporters (Patail)
11. Rubber Stamp Adventures: God’s World; Noah’s World
12. Kids’ Magnepoems: Nature; Love; Ocean Life; Expressions
13. Read All About Me; Days in My Life; My Picture Story Pad (Alex)
14. Pages and Pockets; Girl of Today Doll and Books (Pleasant Company)
15. Blurt (Webster)
16. UpWords(MiltonBradley)
17. The Children’s Travel Journal by Ann Banks (Little Book Room)
18. Little Bear Book by Heidi Thompson (Orca Publications)
19. Make Believe (Klutz Press)

Software:
1. The Amazing Writing Machine (Broderbund)
2. Bailey’s Book House (Edmark)
3. Imagination Express: Destination Castle; Destination Neighborhood; Destination Rain Forest (Edmark)
4. Myst (Broderbund)
5. Read, Write and Type! (Learning Company)
6. Storybook Weaver (MECC)
7. Magic Theatre (Knowledge Adventure)
PRIMARY STUDENTS GET PUBLISHED

Spring Tides magazine is published each spring, containing exclusively work from students ages five to twelve. They want first rights, no reprints. Fiction to 1,200 words can be adventure, ethnic, family, fantasy, history, humor, animals, mystery, nature, science fiction. Nonfiction, also to 1,200 words, can cover nature, personal experience, animals and humor. They use 35 fiction and 35 nonfiction pieces each issue. All styles of poetry are accepted, to 20 lines, any number sent at once. Illustrations that accompany a story or poem are also welcome. No simultaneous submissions. Pay is a byline, publication, and one contributor's copy. Editor's tips: Materials should be carefully proof read and typed. Each piece must be labeled with name, grade, school, birth date, home and school address. Include a signed statement from a parent or teacher verifying that the writing is original and by the student. SASE for free guidelines. A sample copy $5 with a SASE and four stamps. Submit to Editor Connie Houston, 824 Stillwood Drive, Savannah, GA 31419-2643.

TEENS GET PUBLISHED

Lighthouse is a 56 page literary magazine for all ages. Publication is quarterly. Fiction to 1,500 words on any topic including sci-fi, drama, romance and problem solving. Pays up to $50. Poetry on any topic can be up to 50 lines; pays $5. Sample copies are $3. Editor's tips: Your writing needs to be acceptable to the whole family. We want only wholesome values. If you use a moral, blend it into the plot and action skillfully. Send original adventure, romance, mystery and humor, or any blend. Editor Tim Clinton, P.O. Box 1377, Auburn, WA 98071-1377.

STUDENT CONTESTS

Negative Capability Contest for all ages results in publication in a journal. Postmark deadline is January 15. First rights required. Responds in four weeks. Send two copies of typed project with cover letter and brief biography. SASE for free guidelines and theme list. Fiction or nonfiction of 1,500-5,000 words is accepted on theme. All styles and lengths of poetry OK; shorter is better. Also accepts 5 x 8 B/W photos, and art to 8 x 11, though not contests. Prizes: Publication, one contributor's copy; Fiction and Poetry, $1,000 each; occasional nonfiction prizes. Tips: Send your best work. Art and photos returned with SASE. Writing not returned. SASE for winners list. Entry fee is $10 per story, $3 per poem. No critique. Send to Editor Sue Walker, 62 Ridgelawn Dr. E., Mobile, AL 36608.

WRITER'S WORDS TO KNOW

First rights—The first place the work is ever published..

Simultaneous submissions—Sending identical projects to more than one editor.

Byline—Having the author's name next to the work, i.e. by Susie Smith..

Contributor's copy—Free copies in which the author's work is published.

Proof read—To read through work and edit for best quality, numerous times.

by Penny Lent

Penny Lent lives in Puyallup, Washington, with her husband, two sons, two orange cats, and assorted northwest slugs. Lent is a frequent conference and school speaker and has freelanced over six hundred articles for radio, magazines, and her newspaper columns. She is editor and designer of two national newsletters and has authored seven books, including Young Writer's Market Manual, Young Writer's Contest Manual and Young Writer's Manuscript Manual from Kaleidoscope Press.

Read On, Write On, Get Published
This issue our emphasis will be on general and specific pet care topics. Key words to cue in: (animals, animal care, pets, pet care, veterinarian, zoology). Among the various areas of study available under “animal care” include: animal classification, zoology, animal behavior, environmental/habitat studies, and camouflage animals. Under the heading “pets” find: pet adoption, pet-sitting, breeding, animal language, and medical conditions/first aid. Other miscellaneous but interesting subtopics are: pet cookbooks, pet jokes/riddles, pet exercise, pet fiction, and pet games.

Listed below are some of the best overall guides to pet care.


* **The Complete Book of Pet Care** by Dr. Peter Roach. Howell Book House, New York, 1995. This is a guide to care for birds, cats, dogs, fish, guinea pigs, hamsters, horses, mice, rabbits, reptiles and amphibians. As the title suggests, this book is complete in its detailed coverage of animal care and treatment. Included are many “how it really happens” photos to further illustrate a specific technique or training procedure.

* **How To Make A Miniature Zoo** by Vinson Brown. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1956. This book is an oldie but a real gem. If you can find it, you’ll be able to construct your own mini-zoo at home. Chapter titles are: Planning Your Miniature Zoo, Insects, Spiders and Their Relatives, Aquarium Making, Amphibians and Reptiles, Mammals, Birds, and Some Tasks and Goals of Zoo Keeping. This book makes interesting reading even if you do not choose to make your own zoo!

The Resource Section.

* **The Merck Veterinary Manual**. This hefty volume contains everything you want to know about a variety of animals. A professional reference book containing complete information on: entire functioning of animal physical bodies, behavior, clinical procedures, lab and zoo animals, management, husbandry, and nutrition, pharmacology, poultry, toxicology, and much more!

Try This.

* Periodicals (magazines). Our library system uses InfoTrac EF for its periodicals search. When beginning a word search for pet care in general, first type in the title of your subject guide (example: Pets). Second, cue in your key word(s) and a search will begin for any compatible articles under the heading you have provided. You can use one word, several, or even phrases from titles to help narrow your listing of articles (example: pets, zoo). Once the computer has completed its search, it will provide you with a list from which to choose. As you scan for articles you are interested in, take note that your source (periodical name, issue, year, page number) will be listed along with the title of the article, author’s name, abstract (a short review of the article’s content) and subjects (additional topics to check under for further study). You can also choose to narrow your search by specifying certain conditions relevant to your study or explore by requesting articles listed under subdivisions and related subjects. This is a wonderful and comprehensive way to initiate

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**Check It Out**

**Homeschoolers Using Their Public Library**

by Michele Howe
resource building skills in children (and adults).

Fun Stuff.

* Animal Family Calendar. A coloring book where kids color in pictures of animals with their babies. Lets your child develop art skills and familiarity with the calendar. Hewitt Moore Foundation.

* Kid’s Animal Exercise Fun. Teaches children breathing, stretching, aerobic, balance and more! Even studies real animal behaviors and movements. Stresses good health habits and coordination. Hewitt Moore Foundation.

Local organizations which offer demonstrations on pet care and safety include: Human Societies, Animal Protection Agencies, Animal Control, and 4-H chapters. Don’t forget to contact nearby zoos and petting/working farms for classes and apprenticeships. Some veterinarians also offer tours and some permit limited visits during minor animal surgeries. Our city has a Pet Library where a professional animal handler comes to a homeschooling group/class and demonstrates (with the pet of your choice) how to care for and train specific animals.

Tips To Take With You.

* Circulating Encyclopedias. All library systems have resource materials that cannot be removed from the premises and you must use these while at the library. However, many systems now have encyclopedias which can be checked and borrowed from the library.

* Ask your librarian for the easy reading section (grade levels of 1 -3) of the library for younger children whose reading skills are not yet ready for the general titles found throughout much of the library shelves. In this section, both fiction and non-fiction is available so the easy-reader can find biographical, historical, scientific, and general interest books to use as reference in report writing.

* Take time to look for The Internet Kids Yellow Pages written by Jean Armour Polly and published by Osborne Series. This book is chock full of interesting (and safe) websites for kids to look up. Virtually every topic imaginable is listed in this handy reference volume.

Michele Howe is a freelance writer living in LaSalle, Michigan with her husband Jim (a public high school instructor) and their four homeschooled children.

Tips To Take With You

* Inquire into the Internet accessibility in your library system. Many systems are making available an 800 number which allows you to check into the resources currently in your library system without leaving home.

* If your library is using the Dewey Decimal System, the first number on the binding of the call number will usually be grouped with similar books of its kind. Once you locate a particular call number, you can select from a larger grouping of books than you knew was available.

* Check to see if your library has an encyclopedia in CD-Rom such as Microsoft Encarta. This is yet another good way to locate information pertinent to your home state in bite sized chunks.
Living the Story to Give It Life

Profile of Peggy King Anderson

by Lorinda K. F. Newton

Lorinda K. F. Newton is a freelance writer, editor, and desktop publisher who lives with her husband in Kirkland, Washington. She is editor and designer of the Northwest Christian Author and Life Line newsletters.

Peggy King Anderson, a children’s author, conference speaker, and writing-workshop teacher, believes that to write a story, one must first experience it. Life infuses her fiction because Anderson connects with her characters on emotional and physical levels. Her enthusiasm for writing spills over into her teaching as she shows students how to use this technique through imaginary and sensory exploration.

Anderson now loves to share the excitement of writing. Yet, as a child she held no aspirations to be a writer. Though she won first place in an essay contest in the eighth grade and had a teacher write on top of a paper, “A+, you are a writer,” her interest wasn’t sparked. Instead, she pursued a degree in medical technology and worked in that field through her first year of marriage. Then her five children and various community activities in Tucson, Arizona, filled her time.

However, after the death of her three-day-old baby, a counseling session changed her life’s direction. At the same time, her husband received a job offer from Boeing in Seattle.

Knowing that the move would take Anderson away from family and her numerous community activities, the counselor asked, “What are you going to do when you move?”

Anderson answered, “I’m going to write.”

“I thought that is one of the best gifts you could give kids. If you can get kids to love reading, it opens up any door in the world for them. They can learn anything. They can do anything. So I wanted to be part of that. I wanted to write things that kids would love to read.”

Whether writing for the Christian or secular market, at whatever level she can, Anderson seeks to communicate that God loves each child, and that each is special, unique, wonderful, and has gifts.

In addition, Anderson feels it is important to help her readers better understand their emotions. She accomplishes this by allowing her characters to wrestle with particular issues throughout a story.

For example, in The Fall of the Red Star, Anderson focused on Stephen’s struggle between the ideal and reality of the Hungarian revolution:

He wants to fight for freedom and that chance to have his father, who may or may not be alive, come back. And yet, when he is in the position in which he really has to fight and to actually kill, Stephen experiences an incredible conflict. He looks at his hands that could draw music out still surprised I said it, but it must have been incubating there all those years.”

Following her counselor’s suggestion, Anderson made a three-year plan for her writing. The first year, she just wrote letters to relatives. The second year, she wrote for the Catholic school’s newsletter. Then on January 1, 1981, she sat down at her typewriter in the laundry room and wrote her first story, a children’s story, “The Vegetable-Soup Pumpkin.”

This piece didn’t sell right away, but later that year she sold a Christmas story to Pockets magazine, for which she now writes a regular feature. Today, Anderson’s articles have appeared in several children’s magazines, such as Highlights for Children and Brio, and she has published four books (see sidebar). She has won three writing awards, including the Magazine Merit Fiction Award from the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, and she has taught creative writing at Lake Washington Technical College in Kirkland, Washington, for over ten years.

Writing for children

When asked why she writes for children, Anderson exclaimed with delight, “Because I love children’s books.” Her love of reading also drives her passion for writing:

“If you can get kids to love reading, it opens up any door in the world for them. They can learn anything. They can do anything. So I wanted to be part of that. I wanted to write things that kids would love to read.”

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of a piano, music that could make people laugh and cry, and move them to the depths of their spirits. And with those same hands he had killed a man.

Anderson connects with her characters on a deep, emotional level by “living with them.”

“All day, as I’m confronting things, I try to imagine what my character would be doing,” she explained. For instance, when Anderson goes to bed, she asks herself, “What is Ellie doing now?” (Ellie is the main character of the book she is currently working on, Spring Forward, Ellie.) “Is she lying awake worrying about something?”

Teaching children to write

Anderson has so much fun writing that she loves to share this joy with others, particularly with children.

“I get so excited to see kids turn on to writing!” she exclaimed. “When I go into the classroom, my goal is to see the kids get turned on, to experience the excitement of writing.” And getting them excited she does.

Anderson teaches writing through prewriting, a process through which she covers setting, character, plot, and other writing elements one piece at a time. One of the scenarios she uses is the Drell mystery.

While the students are out of the room, Anderson arrives to set up her props. When the children return, she says, “Today we’re going to solve a mystery together. And we get to write the story.” Then she asks if they see any mysterious clues in the room. The students the sombrero she has brought in. “Oh, there’s a hat! There’s a hat!”

She has one of the students examine the hat. Underneath the hat is an old, battered tin can with a note inside: “Help! Drell is missing. Meet me at Crystal Rock.”

“What do you think Crystal Rock is?” asks Anderson. “Where is it?” The kids start brainstorming, and Anderson jots their ideas down on an overhead. Then she stops and says, “Really fast now, write down what you think it is and where it is.” At this point, the students describe their settings without realizing they are creating them.

Next, she asks, “Who is Drell? And who’s going to meet you at Crystal Rock when you go there?” So the brainstorming continues, and the children develop their characters. “Okay, real fast now, write out who Drell is going to be in your story.”

By prewriting a few pieces at a time after brainstorming sessions, the students get caught up in the story and focus less on the fact that they are writing.

“Kids get hung up on the self-consciousness of trying to put words down,” said Anderson. “So, I don’t focus on the words, but on that reality they’re trying to convey.”

To help the children develop more vivid stories, Anderson asks questions using the five senses. “To get kids to write,” she explained, “you really need to focus on the sensory.” Anderson encourages parents and teachers to “give children an experience. Help them notice the senses. Help them zero in with the specific, so they will look at a really small detail.” She gave the example of having a child look at the backyard through a toilet paper roll and asking what they really sees in that narrow view.

Sensory experiences with the family can happen at the zoo, walking down the street, at a bug exhibit at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, or even while making a batch of peanut-butter cookies.

“Whatever you do,” said Anderson, “help your children perceive sensory detail. Notice how flour looks fluffy in the bowl. How the spoon clangs against the bowl. How peanut butter tastes and smells and how the stickiness feels. Then encourage them to record this experience.”

Relying on real and imaginary experiences, Peggy King Anderson creates stories that come alive in the reader’s mind, and with enthusiasm and encouragement, she teaches others to do the same.

Children’s Books by Peggy King Anderson


It’s the first day at a new school for Megan. Throughout the book, she is confronted with choices about making friends, whether to step forward and befriend someone or to be shy. The child reading the book gets to make the choices for Megan and determine whether she has a happy or sad day.


Sixth-grader Tony struggles with the need to care for his 4-year-old sister, the confusion about his mother’s strange sickness, his anger towards his father for deserting them, and his yearning to just be a kid and play baseball. At the end of the book, Tony learns to forgive his father, who returns, and to accept his mother’s alcoholism.

Many teachers have read this book and Anderson’s out-of-print book, Coming Home, aloud in their classrooms.


This historical novel describes the 1956 Hungarian revolt against the Soviets through the eyes of a 14-year-old boy. In the beginning, Stephen joins the freedom fighters, but when the Soviets return to squelch the revolution, his family escapes to Austria through a swamp. This story is based on the Szablya family’s personal experience. Some violent scenes depicted in this book may be inappropriate for young children.

Teachers of fourth through sixth graders read aloud this book to help their students understand, not only this historical event, but current events such as the strife in Bosnia as well.


In commemoration of Washington State’s centennial in 1989, ten authors wrote this collection of stories. Each chapter focuses on one decade in history and tells a tale about a child’s life during that time. The children come from all racial backgrounds, and through their adventures, the readers learn about state history. Tying each chapter together is a small, wooden horse. This horse is either lost or given away by one child and found or received by the child in the next chapter. Anderson wrote the last chapter of the book.

This book is often used by the Washington State public schools to help teach Washington State history.

Workshops by Peggy King Anderson

Peggy King Anderson is available to teach creative-writing workshops in schools, libraries, and community centers. For more information, call (206) 823-6149 or write, Peggy King Anderson, 8620 NE 133rd Pl., Kirkland, WA 98034.
I weave a silence onto my lips
I weave a silence into my mind
I weave a silence within my heart
I close my ears to distractions
I close my eyes to attractions
I close my heart to temptations

Calm me O Lord as you stilled the storm
Still me O Lord, keep me from harm
Let all the tumult within me cease
Enfold me Lord in your peace.

David Adam

For over a millennium, ever since A.D. 634 when St. Aidan established his mission during the depths of the Dark Ages, Lindisfarne—Holy Island—has been a place of pilgrimage. Spiritual seekers from many lands have dared the dangerous tidal flats to reach this tiny island off Britain’s Northumberland coast. Lindisfarne’s long history is a chronicle of the defense of Christian faith against intractable pagan assault.

According to the Venerable Bede, Aidan cultivated peace and love, purity, and humility; was above anger and greed; despised pride and conceit; kept and taught the laws of God; and was diligent in study and prayer. He used his priestly authority to restrain the proud and the powerful. He comforted the sick and aided the poor.

I visited Lindisfarne on a June day when the tourists had retreated to the mainland and the tiny village lay calm and peaceful. The priory that flourished for nearly five hundred years lies in ruins, but the rubble still bears testimony to the effectiveness of Aidan’s labors, and those of his successor, Cuthbert.

On Holy Island the spirit of those saintly monks seems to linger, as if the very contours of the island are endued with their gentleness. And worship continues on Lindisfarne.

I hurried through the ruins to the 12th century parish church of St. Mary, where the vicar, David Adam, conducted evensong.

My first encounter with Celtic Christianity had occurred a year earlier when I read Adam’s book *The Cry of the Deer*, meditations on the *Hymn of St. Patrick*. In *The Cry Of The Deer* I discovered an approach to Christianity different from that of much contemporary worship.

The Celtic Christians approached their faith in a reverent, prayerful, relevant, quiet, and gentle manner. The Celtic Christians—saints like Aidan and Cuthbert—acknowledged God’s transcendence, but infused that recognition with an almost overwhelming sense of the Incarnation, the Presence of God with us.

“Lord, deliver us from sour-faced saints,” pleaded St. Teresa. Though simple and austere, the Celtic saints discovered joy.

A Northumbrian himself, Adam spoke with the spirit of those departed saints. The atmosphere in St. Mary’s reminded me of when I stood at the tomb of St. Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral and listened to the prayers of a group of Dutch pilgrims.

“Not long ago,” Adam wrote in *The Cry of the Deer*, “I was in a little gray chapel in a valley. The preacher was rather tedious and the hymns dull. I could have endured both, but when he started his prayers by saying, ‘Now I want you to imagine God is present,’ I could have wept. I now knew why it was such heavy going: he did not know of the Presence, he could only imagine it. God is beyond our greatest imagination; either He is present, and that influences everything we do, or He is absent, and then we are poor indeed.”

The Presence of God is one theme that runs through Adam’s writings. He also shares the Celt’s love for the earth. “One of the saddest impressions that some Christians give,” he writes, “is that they do not love this beautiful world. Let us show beyond doubt that we believe this is God’s world, we believe in a Creator, and that every part of this world ought to show that it belongs to him. It is in this world that He has chosen to create us; we are here to live to His glory.”

The current revival of interest in Celtic Christianity—a revival that
cuts across denominational boundaries—can be traced to a handful of people, including David Adam. Adam has labored to keep alive the vision and the legacy of the Celtic saints of Holy Island, allowing their voices to speak to the 20th century. Beginning with his first book, The Edge of Glory—Prayers in the Celtic Tradition, published in 1985, he has sought to recapture the Celtic manner of prayer.

Adam’s desire, he writes, is to “walk the edge of glory and see for oneself the ever abiding presence, that never leaves us or forsakes us: the encompassing God, the watchful eye, the strong helping hand, the power of the Spirit. Only then can we go out in mission, for then we go not in our own strength and ideas, but in the power and love of the God who abides.”

The prayers in The Edge of Glory grew out of Adam’s parish work, where they were regularly used in parish worship. To Adam, prayer is an essential of the Christian life. “If prayer has become boring, or you have ceased to pray, there is nothing wrong with prayer—and the Almighty cannot be boring. There is something wrong with the way you are doing it. Too much of prayer has lost its rhythm... Prayer that has lost its simplicity of relationship with God is too contrived... above all things, seek him. If there is to be any real glory in your life, remember it is his and from him.”

Thanks be to thee, for the gifts thou givest me,  
Each day, each night, on land and sea  
Each weather, fair, wild or calm  
For thine eye to keep from harm  
For each hour, its ebb, its flow,  
For thine arm around me so  
For each gift thanks be to thee  
The best gift is thyself to me.

Adam’s subsequent books—Tides and Season, Power Lines, The Open Gate, and most recently The Rhythm of Life, continue his explorations into the simple, direct, nature of Celtic Christian prayer. Besides The Cry of The Deer he has written another meditation, The Eye of the Eagle, on the familiar hymn “Be Thou My Vision.” Fire of the North tells the story of Adam’s favorite saint, Cuthbert, who for him embraces much of the Celtic vision and attitude towards life.

I bow before the Father  
Who made me  
I bow before the Son  
Who saved me  
I bow before the spirit  
Who guides me  
In love and adoration  
I give my lips  
I give my heart  
I give my mind  
I give my strength  
I bow and adore thee  
Sacred Three  
The Ever One  
The Trinity

*

I spoke with David Adam on the steps of the rectory, and later he took time to answer questions about the role of Celtic spirituality in the modern world.

He finds the relevance of Celtic Christian spirituality for today in the Celtic relationship with and care of Creation, and in the deep awareness of mystery and Presence.

“We have the very things the world lacks,” he says. “We add to this a deep joy rather than the gravity of much of the church. The Celtic Church learned to laugh because of the Presence.”

What makes Celtic spirituality unique? And what are the most essential aspects of Celtic spirituality?

“Celtic spirituality is not so much unique—unless you mean in emphasis. Its emphasis is on the God who comes, who comes down and comes in. It is a thoroughly incarnational faith. The immanence of God is the great message—and his love for the world. It is a good world and belongs to God and we need to share in its Creation and Redemption.”

I wondered if the current interest in the Celtic Church was a passing fancy or if it had potential to be an agent of renewal in the Church.

“Let’s hope that it is not a passing fancy,” he replied, because it deals with the deep relationships and realities of life—if it is lost, the world will be much poorer—and less safe! It is for such reasons there is a growing interest in the Celtic Church, in Wales, Scotland, N.E. England, and Ireland in particular.”

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RATING SYSTEM

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<th>Quality of Material</th>
<th>Acceptability of Material</th>
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<tr>
<td>5    Excellent - among the very best of this type</td>
<td>5  No questionable elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>4    Good - well written; strong recommendation</td>
<td>4  Slight concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3    Average - readers will enjoy</td>
<td>3  Moderate concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2    Fair - can recommend, but not as well written</td>
<td>2  Barely acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1    Poor - cannot recommend</td>
<td>1  Too questionable to recommend</td>
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*I Have a New Friend* explores the cultural differences between two kindergarten girls who meet at school.  Lisa writes a letter to her grandmother about her new Japanese friend Saki and about the development of their relationship.  Lisa is tells about introducing Saki to American customs and culture such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, spaghetti and meatballs, Halloween, and Valentine’s Day.  Saki teaches Lisa about chopsticks, teriyaki, kimono, and Hina Matsuri, a Japanese celebration that means Girls’ Day.  The book has a glossary of terms and a full explanation of Hina Matsuri and how it is observed.

The black and white photos are of the two girls visiting each others’ homes, at school, and at play.  The photos are a delightful mix of posed and candid shots that capture their charm.

The book is written to celebrate the differences between people and cultures and how understanding those differences and finding similarities helps us all to get along.  This purpose is achieved in a well written, nicely paced, even-handed manner.

u Quality - 5  § Acceptability - 5

Sally Kuhns
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


*The Christmas Story* is the story of Jesus’ birthday told complete in simple words.  First the angel comes to Mary telling her that she will have God’s son.  Then Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem and find no room in the inn.  Baby Jesus is born and placed in a manger while an angel announces the news to the shepherds.  Far away wise men see the star and came to see baby Jesus.

What child doesn’t like to play make believe or imitate grown ups?  The Let’s Play Series in hardback gives guidelines for acting out well known Bible stories.  At the end of each short book are ideas for acting out the story.  Not only will children have fun using their imagination, but they also will be learning the basic Bible stories in a way they will never forget.  The Let’s Play Series is practical in its approach of what can be used for props, encouraging the use of materials found in any home.  These series are ideal for Sunday school teachers, homeschool mom’s, and those working with children.  Parents can also use this series for a family night together.

**Other titles in the Let’s Play series:**
- In the Beginning
- David and Goliath
- Noah’s Ark

Dorcas Walker
Freelance Writer
Jamestown, Tennessee


As a retelling of the Christmas story, *The Toddlers Bible Christmas Book* introduces preschoolers to the familiar story of Jesus’ birth.  Divided into five chapters, the picture book covers the annunciation, the birth of Christ, visits from the shepherds and wise men, and the flight into Egypt.  The language is simple, using questions to draw toddlers into the story.  The book also offers a chapter called “Tips for Parents” which gives parents additional ideas to expand on the story, including Bible references, questions, and activities.

The book does not stand out as particularly creative, instructive, or well-written—but neither is it badly written, lazy, or empty.  Its value lies in the ability of the parent to expand on the themes and subjects on which Christmas Book touches.

u Quality - 3  § Acceptability - 5

Georgia Beaverson
Freelance Writer
Madison, Wisconsin


Best-selling children’s author V. Gilbert Beers writes a special group of six stories to introduce little ones to the events of Easter.  Starting with Palm Sunday, the book takes the events of Holy Week and explains them simply for children to understand.  Carole Boerke illustrates the stories in simple, vivid color.

This is an excellent introduction for children to become familiar with the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus.  It does presuppose that a child has background and training in the Christian gospel.  Some vocabulary such as the words “sin” and “Savior” need to already be understood or explained in the reading as the book assumes an understanding of such words.  The book is faithful in portraying the events of Easter, but lacks interpretation and could be confusing to a child without the necessary background in faith and Christian education.  It deals with concepts that are not easy for adults to understand and leaves a lot of gaps that might be pretty bewildering for a young child.

u Quality - 3  § Acceptability - 5

Mary Jarvis
Freelance Writer
Marysville, Washington


A long box arrives in the mail for Katie and Jake from their grandparents.  The contents, a pair of stilts for Katie and a lasso for Jake, lead the children into a summer full of learning how to use these unusual gifts.  Young readers will laugh when Jake lassoes the water faucet, resulting in a flooded bathroom, and Katie solves the dripping water problem with bubble gum and her stilts!  Broken into four short chapters, Barbara Birch has written a tale of adventure and misadventure in which the children eventually put their newly learned skills to work entertaining Miss Emma, the elderly neighbor, with her own birthday circus party.

Written as a book for early readers with a reading vocabulary of 300 words, Taia Morley’s lively

*Katje and Jake and the Haircut Mistake* is an excellent book for helping young children gain proficiency in reading. The book uses large print, contains fewer than 300 different words, and the vocabulary is at first to second grade reading level. Sentences are kept short in an easy-to-read format.

The thirty-one page book contains one story broken up into short chapter segments. Katje and Jake learn that their Aunt Sarah is coming for a visit. They decide to make everything clean and shiny for her visit but end up with dust in Katie’s hair and dirt on Jake’s hands. Their efforts to “fix” their mistakes lead them to more problems.

This is an enjoyable book containing both black and white and color illustrations. The pictures are charming in themselves and an asset to the story.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Donna Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon


My grandma is taking a trip around the world. As she prepares to go each time she says, “What would you have me bring?” The answer: “not much,” becomes a baobab seed from Africa, a boomerang from Australia, a sunrise from Mexico, a rainbow from Hawaii, an iceberg from the Arctic, some curry and rice from India, a mountain from Switzerland, something small from the Great Wall of China, and the smell of rain from England.

Jo Ellen Bogart’s *Gifts* are enticingly portrayed by the colorful plasticine illustrations on every page of the book. Many facts are indirectly learned about each place while focusing on the gift that will be received.

Children will want to read this book themselves. However, it becomes a special treasure when shared with your grandmother.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Judy Driscoll
Teacher, Christ the King Academy
Poulsbo, Washington


This delightful book for beginning readers is made up of three short stores. Sam, a plain looking brown dog, has a charming personality and loves to be in the thick of things. In the first story Sam shows how well-trained he is at fetching. He fetched everything that could fit in his mouth. When Molly and Noah went to school, Sam got bored and brought a pile of newspapers to the door, and then he fetched the neighbor’s clothesline. Complete with laundry.

In the second story we learn that Sam is a web-footed dog who loves water. Everywhere Sam finds water, he jumps in for a quick swim—much to the chagrin of the fishermen, the people on the beach, the policeman at the fountain in the park. But the kids love it when Sam jumps in the pool with them.

Sam does not do well by himself at night. When everyone goes to bed in the third story, Sam is left alone downstairs. He has soon played with all of his toys. He sings, he barks, he scratches, and he growls, leaving the family with no alternative except to get up very early. And what did Sam do? It had been a long night and he was tired.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Helen Hunter
Author/Freelance Writer
Cedar Rapids, Iowa


Five little animals—a squirrel, a bird, a bunny, a cat, and a dog—shiver in the cold as snow begins to fall. They scamper to shelter in their snow-covered homes. Warm sunshine beckons the animals out again to play in the snow with a boy and a girl.

Young readers will watch with great interest as the children create snow images of the five animals, transforming Carol Schwartz’s beautiful furry illustrations from earlier pages into small white statues.

Readers will listen intently to the author’s gentle, repetitive phrasing as the snowy world melts into puddles and the real animals run with the children into the woods to play their respective games. Surprise! They all find a snowdrop flower, the first sign of spring. A poem-song about spring (without musical notation) appears on the last page.

Because the book incorporates limited vocabulary and much repetition, a primary reader will also enjoy reading the story alone. In addition to building concepts of cold, snow, animal identities, kinds of play, weather and seasonal changes, and the snowdrop flower, the book charms children with the wonder of snow and a subtle suggestion to do more than just build a snowman.

Another outstanding book from Margaret Wise Brown, *Animals in the Snow* is melodious entertainment, as soft as a lullaby.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Rhonda Marie Luckey
Freelance Writer, Retired Teacher/Librarian
Tukwila, Washington


Narrated by the bouncy colorful unnamed main character, the subject of good and bad choices is explored in this tenth book of the Child’s Steps to Jesus series. A little girl is faced with making choices in what she will wear, what she will eat for breakfast, and who she will play with. When she has to decide whether to take her best friend’s new red rubber ball, she learns that some choices are harder than others and that some choices are more important than others. She finally decides that she can choose to be good even if it is difficult and that praying about her choices can make them easier.

The only weak area of this story is that in the beginning the child’s father chooses to drive too fast, receives a ticket, and must face paying a fine. When our young star asks what a fine is the subject is dropped and the father does not explain. Fine, when our young star asks what a fine is the subject is dropped and the father does not reappear in the story, which may leave some children wondering if a fine is so terrible as to be too awful to explain.

Illustrated with clear colorful homey pictures by Kim Justinen, *Red and Purple on My Feet* would be useful in discussing choices in the classroom, home, or Sunday School.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Judy Driscoll
Teacher, Christ the King Academy
Poulsbo, Washington

P I C T U R E  B O O K S

C H R I S T I A N  L I B R A R Y  J O U R N A L  1 5  J A N U A R Y ,  1 9 9 7

Sitting on Mother’s lap has to be the best place of all. It’s perfect for “resting and talking and listening to stories and watching the birds.” But Kyle realizes that Mother’s lap is disappearing! It has something to do with the new baby and the room the baby needs to grow. Kyle thinks that having a little brother or sister will be great, but he still misses his mother’s lap. When at last his baby brother Matt arrives, Kyle finds that his mother is very busy, almost too busy to offer him his favorite place to sit. Almost—but not quite!

*Will There Be a Lap for Me?* is a great read-aloud book, as well as being appropriate for the early reader. It portrays the tender yet sometimes anxious feelings an older sibling may go through as the family prepares for and finally brings home a new baby. Dorothy Corey writes the text simply yet sensitively as she takes the reader to its very important conclusion: yes, there indeed is enough room and love in a home for more than one child! Even if Mother’s lap isn’t always available.

The illustrations by Nancy Poydar match the text with their bright yet tender portrayals of family life. Each page depicts a homey, caring place where security and love are freely offered.

[u] Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


*I Am a Little Giraffe* is written from the perspective of a baby giraffe sharing information on his environment and physical characteristics. The text is very simple and large, making it easy to read to young children. The oversize pages are thick cardboard with old-fashioned, colorful illustrations. The illustrations display the African landscape and other animals that share the habitat with the giraffe.

This book would work well as a read-aloud with its large illustrations and text. There are some difficult words within the text that may stump some early readers but it is a book clearly targeting young children.

[u] Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Sally Kuhns
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


You will experience the rumbling, tumbling Great Earthquake of 1906 in this book through its wonderfully descriptive text and tremendously powerful illustrations. It is definitely a read-it-again-and-again book.

Edward, the son of a San Francisco hotel chef, befriends a little lost dog who becomes even more lost within the maze of a huge hotel. At the time of the earthquake, the little dog remains lost in the hotel and is buried in the basement by rubble. Edward searches and worries about the dog for days.

On returning to the remains of the hotel, Edward and his father hear a wailing and are able to dig under the rubble to retrieve the dog. Edward is given permission to keep him and aptly names him Francis, the Earthquake Dog.

This book is effective in producing the feeling of an earthquake experience. It is interesting also in that the story is based on an actual incident that occurred in the 1906 quake when a small terrier was found in the basement of the St. Francis Hotel.

The beautiful illustrations are bold, colorful, and unusually angled creating a topsy-turvy sense of movement so perfect for this earthquake story. This book will delight readers with reading pleasure and entertaining information on this frequent natural phenomenon.

[u] Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Arlene Neal
Teacher, Covenant School
Grantsville, North Carolina


Maria wakes up each morning to discover that during the night her brown hair has either turned into colors, books, animals, or people. This is scary at first, but Maria soon learns about all kinds of different things relating to what is in her hair. Maria’s hair turns brown at the end of the story. Her mother reassures Maria that she is a unique person unlike anyone else.

*My Head Is Full of Colors* is an eye-catching book designed in brilliant colors that will capture the attention of children. Each page is full of lively colors to keep a child turning the pages even if they cannot read. It is ideal for a read along book to use with a parent and child, or for an early reader as the section of words are kept short on every page. It will help to reinforce self esteem in each child who reads or hears the story.

[u] Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Dorcas Walker
Freelance Writer
Jamestown, Tennessee


*A First Book of Nursery Rhymes*, illustrated by Elizabeth Harbour, is everything a child’s first encounter with nursery rhymes should be. This satisfying collection is nicely varied, combining such cherished favorites as Humpty Dumpty, looking rather smug on his wall, with less familiar gems like Hoddly Poddley or Ding-dong Bell. All of the selections, without exception, display the timeless quality shared by all good nursery rhymes, and they only improve with repetition.

Each selection is graced by its own illustration, sometimes a full two-page spread, at other times a round, self-contained bubble of soft color. Often a particular detail will spill from the frame, to perch delicately amongst the words on the page. The illustrations are a perfect blend of old-world formality and flights of fancy; the structure and symmetry of the pictures complement the structured rhythm of the verses. The end product is reminiscent of an English garden.

The hard cover and sturdy binding will stand up to many readings, and the one-page table of contents will permit quick access when a particular selection is requested.

This collection will be a favorite with those who are new to nursery rhymes as well as those who wish to revisit childhood memories.

[u] Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Sylvia Stopforth
Librarian, Trinity Western University
Langley, British Columbia, Canada


*A First Picture Book of Nursery Rhymes*, illustrated by Elizabeth Harbour, is everything a child’s first
Sheepish Riddles is part of the Dial Easy-to-Read series. The format is question-and-answer in the best joke-telling tradition, i.e., “What did the sheep say to the grass?” “It’s been nice gnawing you.”

The pictures by R. W. Alley are the finishing touch in this forty-eight paged book. The illustrations lend a cartoon quality, a visual chuckle at the absurdity of the riddles.

Sheepish Riddles is part of the Dial Easy-to-Read series. Other books include Batty Riddles, Snaky Riddles, Grizzly Riddles, and Buggy Riddles. The series need not be read in order.

This book deals with sensitive but common contemporary issues in family life. Considering the complexities of disintegrating families, this book would best be used by parents or teachers with children.


The sad dysfunctional state of many American families is portrayed in Robert Lives With His Grandparents. Robert, a young African-American boy, is being raised by his grandparents because of his abandonment by his father, his parents’ divorce, and drug related neglect by his mother. Robert’s maternal grandparents ask the mother if he can come to live with them. She numbly consents, and Robert agrees to leave when the grandparents assure him that his mother can come to visit when she gets better and that his father will know where to find him.

In one poignant picture, Robert is shown sleeping in the same bed his mother used when she was his age, and he goes to sleep thinking of her. He suffers embarrassment at school because his family is ‘different’ somehow. Several of the children live with grandparents or other relatives. In closure, Robert’s grandmother becomes one of the adopted classroom grandmothers.

This book deals with sensitive but common contemporary issues in family life. Considering the complexities of disintegrating families, this book would best be used by parents or teachers with children.

Tim Hinton, in his first attempt at children’s book illustration, is highly successful in the use of warm and effective watercolor scenes.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4

Arlene Neal
Teacher, Covenant School
Granite Falls, North Carolina


The is the tale of Jareb, a young shepherd who helped his older brothers tend their father’s sheep on the hillsides of Bethlehem. Jareb stood out from his brothers for two reasons: one, he was often afraid at night because the nighttime was filled with many fearsome things—dark shadows, the noises of jackals howling and the eerie hooting of owls; and two, Jareb sang to cover his fear. Singing would not be bad, but Jareb couldn’t really sing. His voice was squeaky. His brothers called it “yowling” but agreed that the sheep didn’t mind. Jareb, because of his fears, turned down the chance to go to...
Bethlehem to see the Savior. Instead he decided to stay with the sheep. But when his brothers returned with the wonderful news of the Savior, Jareb was sorry that he didn’t go.

Several days later he decided to go by himself to Bethlehem in search of the baby, only to discover that an angel had already warned the young family that King Herod was sending soldiers to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem. Jareb offered to smuggle the baby out of the city gate in the sling he used for newborn lambs. His pathway is blocked by a huge guard who said, “We’re looking for baby boys. What is that you’re carrying?” Jareb didn’t lie but said his sling was for baby lambs. Then he told the guard how famous he was for his singing. And he burst into song. Of course the guard requested that he stop the noise at once and be on his way. When Jareb met Mary and Joseph at the well outside the city Mary’s words blessed him. “You are a brave young man. And your voice is a blessing from God.”

The illustrations are simple, and in somber colors because many of them are depicting the night. The story shows how children can overcome fear by trusting in God.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Helen Hunter
Freelance Writer
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

P I C T U R E   B O O K S


How shall I say I love you? Stephen Michael King tells of A Special Kind of Love which does not need words to be expressed. He uses watercolors, black ink, and colored pencils for the sweeping sky, sea, and landscapes that form a backdrop for the son to receive the special love from his father. This man who loved boxes built a backdrop for the son to receive the special love from his father. Other people thought the man strange, but not his son.

As a child, Stephen Michael King suffered from partial hearing loss. Because of this he is able to effectively communicate other ways of expressing feelings. This book says you are special and will be appreciated by children who are looking for someone to say I care.
she thinks of winter, a time when the night letters will disappear and composes a response to her friends.

Night Letters is a well-written story of imagination and innocence. By not cluttering this simple tale with any big issues or concepts, Palmrya LoMonaco has embodied some of the best things about being a child. Adding beautifully to the text are the illustrations by Normand Chartier. Children and adults alike will enjoy reading, and even seeking out their own Night Letters.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington


The importance of tradition and passing on what you know is beautifully demonstrated in The Village Basket Weaver. Carpio is an old, old man in a small village in Belize. His grandson, Tavio, is fascinated by the ability of Carpio’s ancient hands to slowly weave an incredibly long basket. As the days pass, Carpio continues his weaving in the company of his grandson, simultaneously weaving his own memories and love of basket-making into Tavio.

A gentle and delightful book, The Village Basket Weaver teaches valuable lessons about experience, respect, mutual dependence, and the importance of individual contribution to a family. But the prose, like the intensely-colored ink and watercolor illustrations by Nadine Bernard Westcott, is never preachy or maudlin. Children interested in ethnic traditions will especially enjoy this tale of passing on a tradition.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Georgia Beaverson
Freelance Writer
Madison, Wisconsin


Arriving with her family at the beach on a hot Sunday, Sara begins the process of making her Famous Seaweed Soup. At each point in recipe, Sara asks for help. Each time, her mother, father, and baby sister claim to be busy with other things. As a result, Sara decides she can do it herself. After the soup is cooked and served, Sara determines that this was her best effort yet, because she did it all by herself.

The ink and watercolor illustrations by Nadine Bernard Westcott match nicely with the tone of this fun story. Famous Seaweed Soup will tempt small children, caught in the “help me” and “play with me” phase, to try some things on their own. Older children will be inspired to make their own version of soup using supplies from their backyard or playground. Antoinette Truglio Martin has written a story children will enjoy hearing all year long.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington


After getting laid off, Laura’s daddy is looking for a new job. Each night Laura helps him look through the newspaper and at each interview he wears his lucky tie—Laura’s favorite—but no job offers come. Laying in bed one night, Laura gets an idea to cheer him up. With the help of her teacher, Laura makes a want ad and resume for someone to be her daddy. After interviewing with Laura, her father promises to always be there and be her daddy. Laura gives him the job as her daddy.

Finding a Job for Daddy presents a family crisis in a comforting and realistic way. No matter the employment status of their parents, all children will enjoy Evelyn Hughes Maslac’s depiction of their feelings and thoughts. Through Laura’s curiosity, children can learn what a resume, interview, and other job related words mean. The watercolor illustrations drawn by Kay Life are almost like photographs, adding depth to the story. This is a charming treatment of a child’s perspective in the face of a family crisis.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Judy Driscoll
Teacher, Christ the King Academy
Poulsbo, Washington


When Marmaduke, the marmalade cat, finds a picture of a tiger, she immediately claims him as her great uncle and begins to boast to all the other cats in the building of her famous relation. However her boasting may backfire as her feline friends challenge her to take them to the zoo to meet her Great Uncle Tiger. Young children will giggle over the expressive faces of each cat as the cats trek through the zoo finding purple hippos, pink flamingoes, alligators, snakes, giraffes, and various other animals, all the time wondering which one is the Great Uncle Tiger. Marmaduke meanwhile is describing each attribute of his uncle tiger in relation to the other animals. “No, no, no,” said Albert with a deep laugh. “That loopy beanie is a giraffe. Besides...Tigers have stripes.” When at last the troupe of cats meets the great tiger, Marmaduke timidly advances toward him to introduce them. The Great Uncle Tiger opened his great jaws to reveal two rows of big white teeth. “Grrrr-rrr-rr-reetings,” at which Marmaduke and his whole feline entourage beat a quick retreat to the safety of their own home. Marmaduke never again boasts of his Great Uncle Tiger.

The simple but colorful collage illustrations of Alex Ayliffe combined with James Riordan’s lively text will keep the young reader returning to this book over and over again.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
E. Riordan, James
Finding a Job for Daddy
Hardbound, $12.95. Gr. 1 - 3.

Finding a Job for Daddy presents a family crisis in a comforting and realistic way. No matter the employment status of their parents, all children will enjoy Evelyn Hughes Maslac’s depiction of their feelings and thoughts. Through Laura’s curiosity, children can learn what a resume, interview, and other job related words mean. The watercolor illustrations drawn by Kay Life are almost like photographs, adding depth to the story. This is a charming treatment of a child’s perspective in the face of a family crisis.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington


Hip Hop and His Famous Face by Gary Oliver and H. Norman Wright is an ideal book for teaching biblical principles in an entertaining story format. Each book in the series “Wonder Woods” focuses on a different forest character working through an emotion that children commonly experience.

Hip Hop is a rabbit who has a problem with anger and whose story is based on Ephesians 4:26-27. One day Hip Hop joins his friends for playtime. They’re looking for something to do. Hip Hop suggests chasing butterflies, but Elwood Elk is no good at chasing butterflies. Each of his suggestions are turned down and Hip Hop feels himself getting an angry. His face turns red, his eyes get squinty, and he begins stomping and snapping at his friends. Soon they don’t want to play with him at all and Hip Hop is left alone. As a very lonely bunny, he decides to take the advice
of Blue Jay and tell his friends how he feels next time he gets angry.

The illustrations by Sharon Dahl of one of the best parts of this book. They are bright, colorful, funny and attractive. They enhance the dialogue and communicate Hip Hop's feelings to the reader.

The final pages contain suggestions for parents in helping a child cope with anger. These include questions to discuss with children and scriptural references on dealing with anger.


Board Book, $8.95. 18 months - PS.

The Baby Jesus, a touch-and-feel board book, gently leads young readers through the familiar story of Jesus' birth. Touch activities include lamb's wool, several lift-and-see flaps, a rough shepherd's cloak, and even a scratch-and-sniff patch. The book seems sturdy enough for little ones past the everything-goes-in-the-mouth stage. The text is simple and fun to read, written in the present tense. The illustrations glow with soft colors, although Mary, Joseph, and the rest all appear disconcertingly Anglo-Saxon.

The book would certainly be an enjoyable bedtime story to read to an active little one during the Christmas season.


Each page of this small devotional book for young children contains a short prayer and Bible reference, appropriately illustrated by Elena Kucharik of Care Bear fame. The prayers are truly short, making them good vehicles for beginning devotions. Parents can use the designated Scripture verses to expand the prayers as children grow older. The subjects covered by the prayers are also appropriate for the preschool crowd, and include loving others, misbehaving, fear, forgiveness, and the wonderful world God created.

While Ms. Kucharik has touched thousands with her Care Bear illustrations, some people may find the pictures in Prayers for Little Hearts impossibly cute and arch. However, the book is an age-appropriate beginning devotional.


Narrating the story of his family's move from the country to the city, Jon tells how members of his family adjust to their new life. While there are things about the country Jon misses, he loves riding the elevator up to their apartment. He also meets a new friend named Skeet Hart. Lizz and Bett, his younger twin sisters, like the new playground and make a lot of friends. His father's job is the reason they moved and now Dad is working long hours. Jon's mother tries at first to paint the apartment and adjust, but after a bad cold, she can't seem to regain her strength or enthusiasm. When Skeet's mother asks about his mom, Jon tells Mrs. Hart his mother is still sick and never eats. With the help of Skeet and Jon, Mrs. Hart makes a huge pot of chicken noodle soup for Jon's mother. Through this gift of kindness and love, his mother's health improves and she begins to sing and cook again.

Written almost conversationally, Noodle Soup by Gloria Repp is a satisfying tale of how to live out our lives as Christians. At the end of the book, the publisher has made a note of how this story relates to Ephesians 4:32, “Be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted...” While there are a number of biblical lessons one could glean from this story, the additional note will help teachers and parents tie the lesson in the book to a specific verse. The illustrations by John Roberts add nicely to the story and the recipe for Grandma Hart's Famous Noodle Soup is also included.


Lois Rock has introduced the youngest listeners to 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 5:3-12. Bible Words About Happiness for Children presents the beatitudes. Bible Words about Love for Children amplifies Paul's writing on love. At the conclusion of both books, the Good News Bible is quoted.

Whether the verse says, “Love is patient and kind,” or “Happy are those who forgive others,” Rock gives a description of the meaning of the verse. She includes a child-like prayer incorporating the theme. For “Love is not jealous,” Rock writes, “Someone who loves you wants the best for you. But a jealous person hates to see you enjoy good things.” The prayer placed next to the text says,

Dear God
You love me
and so you want the best for me.
I want to live for you.

Many of the explanations and prayers offer children assurance of salvation. Happiness for Children begins with the words, “Be God’s friend.” It continues, “You belong to God.” Love for Children starts with, “God loves everyone in the world.” She continues, “Dear God, You love me.”

Claire Henley has created vibrant, and bold illustrations for both books. The scenes are engaging and enjoyable. They naturally fit Lois Rock's text.

A number of denominations will be eager to use these books with preschoolers. Parents and children will enjoy them together.


Familiar experiences, with questions directed to the young reader or listener, lay the foundation for establishing what prayer is all about. Lois Rock skillfully relates Scripture and children's everyday life to how and why we pray. Colorful water color illustrations by Carolyn Cox ground prose to reality.

The author defines what prayer is through many concrete examples and describes how and why we pray. She uses numerous references to...
Scripture to reinforce her examples of experiences children are familiar with. Although in most instances she doesn’t give the exact biblical reference, simply noting the book from the Bible in which it originates. Scripture quotations are written in easy-to-understand language for children. Beginning with being welcomed into God’s family, she proceeds to discuss how we feel and respond to the beauties of nature, our needs and relationships, and our sin.

Text and pictures are done in such a way that children will respond with discussion and questions of their own. This is an excellent tool for parent or teacher to use in exploring prayer and the Christian life with children.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Mary Jarvis
Freelance Writer
Marysville, Washington


Who Lives Here? is a beautifully illustrated book that has children guessing what animal made the home pictured. The answer is disclosed by lifting the well-camouflaged flap revealing the creature. The text provides clues about where the home is found and describes the animal within.

The illustrations match the quality one has come to expect from Sierra Club wildlife photography; however these are warm and colorful drawings rather than photos. Who Lives Here? would fit in well with a curriculum study of habitats in the lower grade levels. The variety of wildlife the interesting forms their habitats take would make an excellent unit introduction.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Sally Kuhns
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


Beautifully illustrated and sensitively written, After Charlotte’s Mom Died portrays the struggle a daughter and father go through to try and recover from a death in the family. Six months after Charlotte’s mother dies in a car accident, her father is withdrawn, moody, and excessively busy. Charlotte’s feelings of abandonment have increased because her dad pays little attention to her, often ignoring her or seeming not to see her.

As a result, Charlotte has no one but her teddy bear to go to with some of the difficult feelings she experiences, such as anger and her own fear of dying. Finally, Charlotte gets her father’s attention by misbehaving on the playground, acting out some of the frustration and anger that have filled her heart. The two begin a process of grief counseling and repairing their relationship.

After Charlotte’s Mom Died doesn’t flinch away from looking at the hard issues surrounding a parent’s death. The prose is clear, easy-to-understand, and factual. With sensitivity and care, the author reports Charlotte’s difficult feelings, explaining them in a way children can understand. The book is excellent, exploring the depths of grief but also offering hope to the grieving child. The only problem a Christian parent might have is that God is not mentioned as a source of comfort.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Georgia Beaverson
 Freelance Writer
Madison, Wisconsin


Dog and Cat Shake a Leg is an easy book for young readers. Dog and Cat are two friends whose adventures are detailed in four chapters in a similar fashion to the Frog and Toad series. This book falls short of the enduring qualities that capture young readers of Frog and Toad with their humor and well-defined personalities. The chapter that was most appealing was one in which they go shopping for a hat for Cat and try on a wide variety of styles. It ends with Cat surprising Dog by purchasing him a cowboy hat.

The illustrations are rather simple and childish but complement the text and are pleasant. This book would fit in a library where more early reader books are needed to provide more choices for emergent readers enamored with the idea of chapter books.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Sally Kuhns
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


Too much city noise! “The Old Man Who Loved To Sing” retires to a secluded valley. Singing, whistling, playing the gramophone, he wins the love of his nearest neighbors: wombats, koalas, cows, mice, turtles, frilled neck lizards, sparrows, camels, a panoply of Australian animals. As the years pass the old man’s forgetfulness gets worse. But this does not worry the animals. They love him just as he is. One sad day, in a hushed valley filled with silent animals, the old man cannot remember the important thing he has forgotten. That’s all right though, because his friends know. First the kangaroos drum, then frogs croak, and birds sing. With love for their old man, all the animals make music. The old man hears his friends, remembers what is missing, and sings.

An Australian book, The Old Man Who Loved To Sing presents a joyful solution to a problem common world wide. It is a colorful look at the joy of learning to love and help each other; a picture of active friendship reaching out in just the right way. Illustrator and author John Winch presents his story with large paintings illustrated by few words. Vivid, busy and engrossing, Winch’s pictures are treasure hunts. What new wonders can we see this time? His depiction of Australian rural life and domestic and wild animals will delight American children and adults.

The Old Man Who Loved To Sing has a reinforced binding. Useful for displaying, the dust cover is attractive and eye-catching. The simple outlines and clear basic lines of the Australian animals will appeal to children who like to sketch.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Donna Eggert
Freelance Writer
Maiden, North Carolina


The Old Man Who Loved To Sing has a reinforced binding. Useful for displaying, the dust cover is attractive and eye-catching. The simple outlines and clear basic lines of the Australian animals will appeal to children who like to sketch.

Learning about fear is the theme of Ric and Rac’s Woodland Adventure by H. Norman Wright and Gary J. Oliver. Raccoon brothers, Ric and Rac, hear scary noises and see frightening sights, only to learn that most of them are their friendly forest neighbors. Singing their, “Fear can be a friend, fear can be a foe,” song as they explore, the raccoons learn when fear is a good thing and when it is unnecessary.

Children will enjoy the cute animal illustrations by Sharon Dahl. The text, however, could prove to be a bit wordy for smaller children. Included is a parent’s guide to discussing fear with children. The guide alone is almost more valuable than the actual story.

Among the suggestions are having children memorize various Bible verses dealing with fear. Parents will want to use this book carefully, especially with small children who are susceptible to the power of suggestion. If the dark and strange noises don’t bother them now, after reading this book it may occur to some children that perhaps they should be afraid.


Letting Swift River Go lyrically tells the story of the flooding of the Swift River and its Massachusetts towns to make way for the Quabbin Reservoir. In softly nostalgic prose, the reader follows Sally Jane as first she outlines the seasons of the Swift River valley. Sally moves on to describe the town meeting that decides the valley’s fate, then sadly describes how the graves in the churchyard are dug up and, one by one, moved to another cemetery. The trees, bushes, and buildings are bulldozed to make way for the huge reservoir, which slowly fills the once-lush valley with gently lapping water.

This picture book doesn’t just tell the story of the reservoir. It’s a story of letting go of childhood and all the pleasures it contained. It’s a story of mourning what once was and accepting what now is. The book also illustrates how a far-away need can effect those around the reader.

Both the prose and illustrations are gently nostalgic in the vein of Virginia Lee Burton’s Little House book. Letting Swift River Go

would make a beautiful reading experience for parent, teacher, and child.


This simple version of The Three Little Pigs is written as an easy reader that will appeal to children, with words that are repetitious in the traditional pattern, yet continue to capture the imagination. The story has each of the first two pigs eaten by the wolf rather than running off to the next pig’s home; some may prefer the latter version.

The full page, colorful illustrations are fun--with one pig wearing glasses--and depict the emotions of the characters enhancing the simple words. Children will enjoy the accomplishment of reading a traditional classic.

The characters in The Better Brown Stories are fed up with their boring story. The Brown family pays a visit to the writer demanding a better tale. Mrs. Brown is tired of having perms, Mr. Brown hates his boring bank job, Betsy doesn’t like her name, and Brian wants a dog. The baby, everyone agrees, must not be forgotten. The writer tacks up a note to himself, “Don’t forget the baby,” and proceeds to give each character a thrilling chapter.

The Better Brown Stories are delightful. Younger readers will enjoy the fantastic tales the writer eventually creates. Older readers can see the way in which a book is written, how the author often interviews his characters. Implausible plots and holes are identified. Leaving many of them, the writer enhances the whimsical mood of the book.

Author Allan Ahlgren lives in England and sets the novel in a little town named Snuggleton-on-Sea. The book has an English flavor because of the retained English vocabulary. Hoovers instead of vacuums, and carries a torch instead of a flashlight. Meanings of unfamiliar words can usually be deciphered from the context, but the more obscure may cause the reader to stop and ask for a definition.

Illustrator Fritz Wegner adds occasional drawings which further develop the text. Added blurs reveal characters to be pawns forced through a story. “Why did I say that?” and other notations make the reader identify with the characters and recall the writer behind it all.

Ahlgren thanks several authors in his acknowledgments. The five stories in The Better Brown Stories reflect those writers and their work. Baby Brown, who is now known as Billy because of a two year time acceleration, flies through a story. “Why did I say that?” and other notations make the reader identify with the characters and recall the writer behind it all.

The characters would agree, it is much better than...hoovering.

Lorie Ann Gowers
Freelance Writer
Kent, Washington


This book A Question of Trust is a very serious book about two young brothers, Brad and Charlie. The main plot deals with the trauma they experience when their mother moves out and into her own apartment. Interwoven with this plot is an equally strong subplot involving the cat Brad and Charlie discover and keep hidden from their father. Matters are further complicated when Cat has two kittens and the boys’ involvement creates huge questions with some very difficult answers.

Brad, the older brother and main character in A Question of Trust, undergoes a major character change in this novel written by Marion Dane Bauer. Not only do his feelings for his mother run the gamut from extreme animosity to, at the last, a semblance of understanding and forgiveness, but his very values are challenged. His actions at times show very poor judgment and one bad decision leads to another, as is the case in the real world. Brad cheats, lies, and steals, but never are the readers (or Brad himself) left with concept that this is the correct action to take. The concluding chapters give some answers and tie up some lose ends but not all, again reflecting reality.

The book deals with a subject many children are living through today. It is very realistic in its approach and the emotions and reactions of the characters. There are several descriptions of a mother cat giving birth that are quite graphic yet not done offensively.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Cel Carey
Middle School Librarian
Plano, Illinois


It’s not easy being twelve. It’s even harder when you’re the oldest girl of five children. It’s harder yet if you’re an Amish farm girl whose mother is very ill. Though she encounters the difficulties of her mother’s death, a housekeeper’s mistreatment of her, a tragic house fire, and much more, Sarah learns and grows through the hard times in the eighth book of the Ellie’s People series.

As with any twelve-year-old girl, Sarah yearns for an understanding friend. She finds that friend in Regina Byler, and their friendship is the glue that holds them together through the storms of life. Throughout her mother’s long illness, the hired girl Sadie often mistreats Sarah and tensions rise until, when her mother dies, Sarah fears that Sadie will be hired on forever. A house fire brings reconciliation between Sadie and Sarah and they become more than friends. As the years pass and young men look her way, Sarah becomes a lovely young woman with marriage in her future.

Though this is the eighth book in the series and some of the character development, understanding of relationships, and story line background is obviously established in previous books of the series, Sarah can nevertheless stand on its own. The customs of the Amish have been developed quite well and the relationships are established sufficiently. Yet, a better grasp of it all would surely come from reading the series from the very beginning.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Susan Aderley
International Ministries, ACSI
Colorado Springs, Colorado

A hot soccer game, a house fire, and a misunderstanding between best friends cause Dana Bellamy and his family anguish and confusion. In the book *Top Wing* by Matt Christopher, twelve-year-old Dana and his good friend Benton look forward to a winning season for their team, the Anchors. A fire destroys Benton’s home when his parents are gone and Dana’s father Hayden Bellamy rescues Benton and his little sister Letitia from the blaze. In so doing, he suffers from smoke inhalation and is hospitalized.

Despite his worry for his father’s health, Dana is proud of his dad, delighted his friend Benton is okay, and anxious to turn his thoughts back to soccer. During the next game, however, he is puzzled by Benton ignoring him, especially when he is in good goal-kicking position. Benton’s behavior becomes more and more strange. He steals the ball from Dana, won’t ever pass it back, and refuses to discuss what is bothering him.

Now Dana has three worries: his father, Benton’s bizarre behavior, and the Anchor’s loss of three games in a row, largely due to Benton’s refusal to be a team player. Benton and his entire family tell the town Mr. Bellamy probably caused the fire as a result of his rewiring the Benton’s house. Now the soccer team is really divided: some support Benton, some Dana.

Dana discovers clues that prove his father’s innocence and confronts Benton with the accusation that he caused the fire by smoking in the attic. Benton confesses and apologizes to Dana and his family. His parents share in the blame, especially for hurting the Bellamys with their careless talk. The boys still have the championship game to play. This time, working as a real team, the victory is certain. Best of all, the families are friends again.

*Top Wing* follows in the pattern of the dozens of Christopher sports books: fast action, many details about the specific sport, tense problems, and satisfying resolution. The themes of friction between friends and soccer game competition complement each other. The resolution in the final chapter is believable and satisfying. However, the pages of the book devoted to detailed description of soccer games are perhaps only of great interest to a soccer devotee. Four full-page pencil sketches of soccer play and one of the fire rescue add to the book’s appeal, as does its length—170 pages. Three students saw the book lying on our library counter and have already asked to check it out!

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

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Author Fred Bowen recalls past baseball greats in *T.J.’s Secret Pitch*. It is Rip Sewell’s true story that inspires fictional T.J. to develop an unusual pitch for his own baseball team. Middle grade readers will enjoy this mix of fiction and fact.

T.J. is small and unable to pitch an unhittable fast ball. He has practiced whole-heartedly but can’t strike out anyone. T.J.’s grandfather teaches him about Rip Sewell and his eephus pitch used in the 1940’s. Again T.J. hits the backyard to practice and pretty soon no one is able to hit his pitches.

*T.J.’s Secret Pitch* is suspenseful from start to finish. Girls and boys are on T.J.’s team, which makes the novel even more appealing to both sexes. T.J. struggles with other issues familiar to today’s young. With his accomplishment, T.J. feels big regardless of his shorter stature. Physical size has nothing to do with his value. He learns to laugh with others.

Bowen offers honest statements of life. T.J.’s father tells him, “I know you feel rotten. But sometimes we can’t get what we want no matter how much we want it or how hard we work to get it.” Here is a great truth for young people to see. A short conclusion about Rip Sewell offers the reader hope: “Sewell had learned during his baseball career that there is always more than one way to achieve a goal.”

*T.J.’s Secret Pitch* will be enjoyed by baseball lovers and expose the sport to novices. Girls and boys will be entertained, learn a bit of history, and see valuable lessons worked out.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Lorie Ann Grover
Freelance Writer
Kent, Washington


Is it ever right to lie? Can stealing be O.K. if you are helping someone as a result? These are the questions that begin running through Sarah Harmon’s head as she becomes involved with trying to help a family of six orphans survive in an old, dilapidated barn.

Sarah first stumbles onto the Freedman family’s hayloft hideout when she is taking the family dog, Lassie, for a walk after school. They see smoke coming from an abandoned barn and decide to satisfy their curiosity by investigating. They find Briny, a girl in Sarah’s fifth grade class, and her four younger brothers and sisters huddled around a metal barrel with a fire built inside. This is the beginning of a friendship between Sarah and the Freedman family, but Sarah is entangled in a web of lying and stealing as she tries to keep the whole thing a secret.

Briny trusts Sarah and explains that both parents are gone and they are at risk of being split up into different foster homes if anyone finds out about their situation.

In the meantime, Jimmy, Sarah’s thirteen-year-old brother, is elected to work on the eighth-grade committee in charge of planning the town’s Wacky Rodeo. Cal Freedman, Briny’s oldest brother, also a part of the rodeo committee, is blamed when all the ticket money they have raised mysteriously disappears. Readers’ curiosities will peak at this point as the focus shifts back to Sarah and her involvement with the missing money. Will Sarah continue to dig herself further into a hole with her lying, or will she break down and tell her parents about the hayloft hideout?

Lassie, an old family favorite from the television series, is a part of Marion Bray’s book that sends readers a strong message about the trapping effects of even one little, seemingly innocent, lie. Children in the upper elementary grades will receive good moral training about lying and its consequences and discover God’s desire for us to live with honesty and integrity.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Sharla Burtel
Teacher, Faith Christian Academy
Lakewood, Colorado

Caught in beautiful poetic rhythm and rhyme, the rippling brook from the melting mountain snows catches the eye of a crow. As he follows the water from mountaintop to ocean, the natural progression of the water’s movement becomes a lovely experience of words. Not only is the water flow discussed, but erosion, waterfalls, and fish pools are also mentioned, all in a lovely little illustrated poem.

The illustrations are simple yet almost real, and ending the book with a map brings a completeness to the journey. Both as writer and illustrator, Cunningham did a superb job with a meaningful poetry for the young child.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Susan Ackerley
International Ministries, ACSI
Colorado Springs, Colorado


Just when you thought Charles and Oliver, the brave *Mice of the Herring Bone*, were ready for a rest, off they go on another high seas adventure in *Mice of the Nine Lives*. Their friends, Admiral Winchester and his crew of cats in service to the Queen, pick up Captain Tabby and some of his “men” who have been set adrift in the sea when sea dog-pirates highjack their ship, the *Seven Seas*, in the Cattibean Sea.

The cats decide to search for the pirates and their leader, the dastardly Captain Crag, and take back the *Seven Seas*. They find the ship but through the trickery of sea dogs, Admiral Winchester is taken captive on San Fiero Island. Charles and Oliver devise an ingenious plan for the admiral’s rescue which, among other things, includes hiding inside coconut “cannonball” and almost being sliced in half!

A timely eruption of the volcano on San Fiero also helps the mice and cats rescue the admiral, the *Seven Seas*, and the Queen’s honor. The sea dogs and Captain Crag reap what they have sown and are left adrift in the Cattibean Sea on a small skiff.

The excitement and adventure needed for middle elementary literature are found in this book, and I believe this series is quickly becoming a favorite of this age group of readers. Beautifully executed pen and ink full-page drawings by the author are found throughout the book.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Arlene Neal
Teacher, Covenant School
Granite Falls, North Carolina


Adam Wheaton and Ross are best friends in fifth grade. They don’t try to compete with each other, they just have fun. Adam lives with his mother, who is a divorcee, and she earns their living. They manage quite frugally and when Adam’s mom wins a million dollar lottery, life dramatically changes for them.

The Wheatons won’t receive all the money at one time, but will be paid over twenty years time, after taxes are deducted. So Mrs. Wheaton will continue working, but she does hope to buy a small house for her and Adam.

Classmates of Adam are affected, too. Suddenly, he is very much in demand and is invited to a popular, but obnoxious girl’s party. He is chosen first to be on a gym team, even though his average athletic skills haven’t changed. A couple of teachers make snide and hurtful remarks overheard by Adam and Ross.

Carol Gorman emphasizes the importance of loyalty of friends, families sticking by each other and the hurts caused by people who are jealous. Spiritual themes of praying for the ones who wrong you and forgiving those who we can’t change, give a good solid Christian foundation to the reader.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4

Barbara Gay Tauszler
Freelance Writer and Book Reviewer
Glenwood, Iowa


This book is made up of twelve historical tales which happened in the state of Georgia, tales of people, places, and even animals. Sometimes the authors have added some information which is fictional and which makes the story more interesting, but almost every story is based in fact. The stories involve topics as diverse as Max, the mascot of a Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia who parachuted with the men in the United States armed forces during World War II; and Mary Hart, the wife of Benjamin Hart, a patriot who fought for independence from England. Mrs. Hart played a major role in the Revolutionary War in 1780. She is the only woman to have a Georgia county named after her. She was very clever and brave to plot against the Tories and send messages to her husband and the other
patriots to come to her aid. And the Tories never figured out what she was doing.

This would be a wonderful history book for homeschoolers. Many of the stories have messages of faith and courage. Both boys and girls will enjoy the adventuresome stories.

Helen Hunter
Freelance Writer
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

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The Ashanti Kingdom, West Africa, 1788. Beloved member of a famous tribe, an honorable clan, a loving family, twelve-year-old Kofi, son of a Great Chief, happily faces his most wonderful day—until a group of African and white slave traders kidnap him. Overwhelming horror brings a nightmare from which Kofi cannot escape. He is “The Captive.” Kofi loses his brother and then Ama, the little slave girl who tries to help him. Only his flute and his rich heritage remains with him. The brutal trek to the African coast, the barbarity, sickness, and degradation on the ship drive the gently reared Kofi to despair. Aboard the ship he forms strong friendships with the white indentured servant Tim and the Captain’s own black slave Joseph. All three boys are illegally sold to a Massachusetts farmer. With the help of his two friends, comforted by his flute, Kofi learns about his new life and the indignities of slavery in a fantastic new world. Beatings, insults, and overwork drive the boys into running away, into a wonderful new life with the African/American, Quaker ship builder Captain Paul Cuffe.

Depicting the taking of the slaves, the horrors of transportation, and the sale of these wretches, *The Captive* includes a lesser known slice of American history, the illegal slave trade in the New England States. The autobiography of the slave Gustavus Vassa, other true slave narratives, and the actual, historical character Paul Cuffe were the inspiration for this novel. A recipient of the Coretta Scott King Award, author Joyce Hansen presents her protagonist, Kofi, so heart wrenchingly that she leads the reader into vividly living Kofi’s experiences beside him. Joyce Hansen presents her characters without pretense. There are good and bad among them all, whether they be black or white, pagan or Christian, slave or free. Kofi's cold New England owner claims to be a Christian. Juxtaposed with this, the greatest help Kofi receives comes from the Christian black slave boy, Joseph, and the Quaker Captain Paul Cuffe. The last chapter ends with promised freedom for Kofi. This is tantalizingly followed by an epilogue introducing a free, adult Kofi. Will the author let us know what happened during those blank years? *The Captive* makes an interesting book to read in company with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Paula Fox’s *Slave Dancer.*

Donna Eggert
Freelance Writer
Maiden, North Carolina

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We do not hear much about the “wild west” of the southeastern United States or the days after the Civil War. Families had to find ways to survive against unbelievable odds with no communities to support them. For Josh and his family, life was very hard. As the only child of the poor Bramlett family, Josh dreamed of owning a dog. If only he could have this canine companion, maybe he could stand the loneliness. His father dreams other dreams. He sees the wild cattle wandering in the wilderness and decides to round them up and drive them slowly to the seaport. The money from the sale of the cattle will improve their lifestyle and sustain them for a long time. However, where can he find men to help? How will the family live on the cattle drive?

On the way back from town, the dog that Josh has been dreaming of appears from nowhere! But, before he can claim him, the dog leads them to his rightful owner, hiding in the trees. Willie Tiger, an orphaned Seminole Indian boy, is desperately trying to help his grandfather overcome a virus. The Bramlettes befriend the helpless man and tend to his illness. Willie Tiger is wary of the white family and dares not trust them. As they share their food and home with them, they learn his story and decide to help him get back with other relatives. The grandfather, though weak, agrees to accompany them on the cattle drive as transportation to his relatives. Willie Tiger and Arcadie, an unsavory character, join as hands and the adventure begins.

Riveting adventure, mystery, and suspense fill each page. As a reader of modern biographies, I have rarely read a “western” that could hold my interest. This book kept me on the edge of my seat for hours and I couldn’t wait to find out what was coming next. The sequence of events is very believable and fun to read. The reader is easily able to relate to the feelings of the characters. As Josh asks hard questions, his father’s firm faith in God shines in his answers as well as his daily living. And Josh learns that faith in God is not just something to talk about but a way of life.

Middle school reluctant readers as well as intermediate boys will enjoy the adventure and mystery in *Brave the Wild Trail.* They will surely be asking for more titles from Milly Howard.

Sharon Ann Raw
Librarian, Valley Christian Schools
Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

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Carrie has reason to be excited. Her adventure starts with a ride on a paddle wheeler to the big city of St. Joseph where the streets are full of prairie schooners, buckboards, and freight wagons. There she and her family stock up with supplies for the journey west. Carrie’s responsibility for the trip is to care of the family Bible. A special pocket is sewn on the inside of the covered wagon canvas to hold it.

Shortly after their journey begins, Carrie is taken captive by the Cheyennes. The only thing she has with her to link her to her family is the Bible. Carrie decides to read it every day just as her preacher father did. Soon she begins learning the language of her abductors. As her language skills increase she begins telling Bible stories to the Indian children. The Indians have decided that the Bible is “good medicine” and Carrie must teach them the difference between their Great Spirit and God.

Milly Howard has combined historical fiction with a study in sharing one’s faith. Even young Carrie can give the Gospel message in a way that leads others to Christ. But not everyone in camp wants to hear the message. And not all those willing to hear will accept.

*Captive Treasure* rings true to its time period and the Indian culture. Black and white pencil drawings add to the pleasure of the book. The large print makes for easy reading.

Myrtlemay Pittman Crane
Freelance Writer
Alderwood Manor, Washington

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JANUARY, 1997

CHRISTIAN LIBRARY JOURNAL
In the castle courtyard the noises of musicians, jugglers, and acrobats distract anyone from noticing Princess Brenna as she slips away into the forest. A prisoner for many years of her greedy uncle, Brenna hopes that her disguise as a servant girl will ensure her freedom. With the help of an old man named Quintag and a juggler boy named Rino, the princess must decide whether to take on the responsibilities that are hers by birth and God’s design.

A publisher’s note refers to the many times in history that individuals were either killed or imprisoned, leaving another to rule. The tale begins many years after her father has been killed in battle and her mother in a suspicious accident. Brenna’s story will appeal especially to children who enjoy fairy tales. Along with castles, dukes and princes, the exciting plot includes galloping horse rides, lots of disguises, and a bit of suspense.

The few black and white sketches add little to the plot, but the full-color picture of Brenna on the cover provides appeal. While entertaining, the story’s impact centers on Brenna’s discovery that the true meaning of freedom is a yielding of her life to the Lord.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Cathy Bittner
Librarian, Cascade Christian School
Tacoma, Washington


Book three in the Journeys of Jessie Land series involves Jessie and her “almost brother” Leo Little Wolf in a dangerous chase for Spanish silver. Jessie and Leo have been invited to join the adult friend, Hazel Womack, for a camping trip on Hazel’s land in Arizona. The year is 1935. When they set out to explore an Indian pueblo, they discover the first in a series of mysterious events. A hole in one of the ancient walls has recently been opened up and then patched with fresh clay. When Jessie and her friends dig through the fresh clay they discover a chest inside filled with artifacts from Spanish explorers.

But Jessie and the others aren’t the only ones interested in this treasure. A hostile neighbor is interested in this treasure. A hostile neighbor is determined to have the chest and its treasures for himself. Complicating their search are rumors of a phantom at the pueblo. A “phantom” that Jessie, herself, hears playing a faint tune in the night.

Jerry Berman has packed nonstop mysteries and close calls in this volume. Jessie and Leo find themselves in one crisis after another including racing to save Hazel when her small plane crashes, being chased by the neighbor, Cal Maddox, and tied up in an abandoned mine, surviving a cave-in and digging their way out, finding Hazel again and being shot at by Cal, and finally racing across the fragile roofs of the pueblo to escape the crazed man. Added to the adventures are Jessie’s faith in God as she turns to him with each new crisis and sees his answers to her prayers.

The book does seem to have a problem with abrupt story changes and only brief, sometimes unsatisfactory, explanations. But despite this, the story is full of action and interesting situations, such as a camel ride through depression-era Arizona.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5
Donna Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon


The Creeping Shadows is Lois Walfrid Johnson’s third book in the Adventures in the Northwoods series. Mysteries seem to follow twelve-year-old Kate O’Connell. It is the winter of 1906 in Wisconsin, and Kate’s step-father must return to the logging camp and leave his family to care for the farm alone during the hard winter. Kate’s family is not the only one having a hard time. Her friend’s family is going to be evicted from their farm if they can’t come up with the mortgage payment.

This story is about getting a second chance to prove oneself and the difficult process of living down a bad reputation. When things begin to disappear in the Swenson house, the natural person to blame is Stretch, who needs to get his life straightened out. Kate has other things to worry about. Her brother Anders thinks she’s not being responsible in taking care of his horse, Wildfire. When the horse comes up lame and the oats box is left open, Stretch seems to be the only one having a hard time. Her friend’s family is going to be evicted from their farm if they can’t. The mortgage payment.

The author tells the hardships of farming in the early 1900’s in a way that makes history come alive for children. Kate learns how to milk a cow and care for a horse. She also knows the terror of watching wolves creep up on the flock of sheep. Interesting characters and local color move the story along.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Myrtilayn Pittman Crane
Freelance Writer, Editor
Alderwood Manor, Washington


Though still in the womb, she was there. Though a tiny tot, she was there. But, she doesn’t remember. Helping this little one experience the “simple things” of a tropical island where she once lived, Kerley weaves interesting tales of life. The story is told through a little girl’s perspective as her mother helps her “see” the island in her Songs of Papa’s Island.

The enchantment of the Pacific island comes alive with stories of geckos and frogs, swimming among the tropical fish, and feeling the balmy tropic. As time passes from conception to toddlerhood, the little girl learns what it was like on “Papa’s Island.” Moreover, her mother’s stories help her and the reader alike feel, smell, and experience the island and its peculiarities.

This unique approach to experiencing the tropical island world is delightful. The parallel tracks of the baby’s and the mother’s experiences strengthen the enchantment and multiply the lessons learned. Though, at times, the text is a bit difficult to follow because of the first person storytelling approach, the book is nevertheless a captivating and educational piece of literature.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Susan Adderley
International Ministries, ACSI
Colorado Springs, Colorado


Written for seven to ten-year-olds, this fifty-three-page book is perfect for those readers leaving the “I can read” books and moving on to their first chapter books. Ten-year-olds may find the story a little young, because of the age and behavior of the main characters. Younger readers will be attracted by the leeches and insects. On a field trip to the University pond, students in Room 2B learn about insects, leeches, and getting along. Song Lee, a “peacemaker,” saves the day by getting rid of the leeches; through her the boys learn something about being a friend and working together.

A strong lead draws the reader into an intriguing story in the first chapter. Dialogue between characters moves the story well. The second chapter slows down enough to allow readers to get to know the characters better. Lack of transition between chapters may be a strength, rather than a weakness, at this level of reading. Song Lee and the Leech Man is illustrated with occasional pen-and-ink type sketches. The art doesn’t distract from the text, but doesn’t seem to enhance it either. Research is well used, with acknowledgment given at the beginning of the
aid him in his times of need. The dialog is simple creations into animals, birds, and airplanes which braindrainers are seeking to catch Paul and drain games, and the fearful KRON, whose army of take imaginary trips.

When two fashionable Boston ladies became serious about a project, the Audubon Society is founded. Harriet Hemmenway, appalled by the bird feathers she observed on women’s hats, enlisted the help of her cousin, Minna. Not only did they encourage preservation of birds, but they also influenced the movement which would give women the right to vote.

She’s Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head! by Kathryn Lasky describes in a very dramatic way the origin of a well-known conservation organization. David Catrow has delightfully illustrated this book with exotic hats and birds, and even a cat who playfully considers the many birds.

Younger children will enjoy the flamboyant illustrations while older readers will learn many facts of early attempts at bird protection and conservation efforts in the United States.

The author’s note at the end of the book has a concise history of the people and events of this story.

The story is enhanced by simple black and white sketches, and a colorful jacket illustration of the pirate chief with his pink cell phone. This is an entertaining comedy that does have a message. Saracen learns that “you can be shy and brave at the same time.”

The Mona Lisa of Salem Street is Margaret Mahy’s clever use of language enlivens the plot, ensuring entertainment as readers enjoy Saracen’s maturing from “a limp lettuce leaf” to “a crisp cucumber in the great salad of life.”

The book are the patterns and descriptions for paper folding.

retired Librarian
Momona, Oregon

The Mona Lisa of Salem Street is Nettie’s story of acceptance and the ability to love again.

Author Jan Marino has written a compelling story of a family making a first start together. While John Peter and Nettie gain strength, the grandfather regains a life he had let slip away allowing the reader to imagine real people. Sibling rivalry, their differences, and their loyalty are all plausible traits. Nicely done.


Orphans, Nettie and John Peter, are used to being sent from one relative to the next. They know in time they will only be returned to harsh Grandma Bessie, although the children can’t stand the thought of going back. But for now, they are off to live with their paternal grandfather. John Peter eagerly embraces the man, gains confidence, and no longer even stutters. Nettie, however, refuses to accept or love the grandfather. She’s sure he is Nettie’s story of

What a winning combination! A camping trip and a treasure hunt! Clancy’s Cabin has both. Three of the Harrington children are given a surprise by their parents after their family of six grows to eight with the addition of newborn twin boys. Because the parents will be so busy caring for the new babies, Mr. Harrington plans a camping outing for the elder three children. Skip is eleven, Marina is ten, and Timothy is eight. They are shown the surprise destination by their father.

He has cleaned, painted, and furnished a little, old cabin on Clancy O’Reagan’s land, a neighbor and childhood friend of the Harringtons in New Zealand. It holds great sentimental value for him as it is one where he spent happy summers when he was a child.

The children are so excited about their week of camping and being on their own. Mr. and Mrs. O’Reagan live close to the cabin and the children are to call their parents each evening from the O’Reagan’s. Each day is filled with new activities and adventures. A stray dog befriends the children, they take daily hikes to explore the area, and they cook their meals over a campfire from groceries their parents provided.

The best surprise is Skip’s discovery of an antiquated treasure map up in the eaves of the cabin. Although the map is written in code, they follow the mysterious clues and what they discover is highly rewarding.

Margaret Mahy has written a grand family book which is sure to enchant children. Illustrations by Barbara Steadman follow the tale closely and add to the intriguing mental images.

The children’s characters are skillfully crafted, allowing the reader to imagine real people. Sibling rivalry, their differences, and their loyalty are all plausible traits. Nicely done.


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worship is negatively drawn, but by the book’s conclusion, Nettie has a positive experience in a church building. However, Marino leads the reader to believe Nettie has communicated in a vague way with her deceased parents.

These concerns are in the midst of a good story. Further discussion and analysis with an 8 - 12 year old reader would be helpful.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 2
Lorie Ann Grover
Freelance Writer
Kent, Washington


The young people in the Peabody Series are from the youth group of the First Bible Church of Peabody, Wisconsin. Penny is the narrator of this story. Her side-kicks in adventure are her younger brother Jack, their even younger, and pesky little sister, Jean. Their neighbor boy, Scruggs, who has recently been adopted by Mrs. Bennett finishes out the group. Scruggs, as a new Christian, is the only one of the group who wants to share his faith. He does a great job and even Penny and Jack notice and wish they could be more comfortable in talking about God.

Doc Ericson and his wife, old friends of the family, have bought an island on Winneca Lake. There they have begun a llama herd—forty of them—and need some summer farmhands to help them with fences, clearing debris, and training the llamas to pull a sulky. All of the kids hire on for weekends.

Their time at Winneca Farms is filled with hard work, emergencies when a pack of dogs attacks the herd and kills some of the baby llamas, and mystery when they discover a telescope in a window across the lake trained on the island. Penny and Jack, who resent having their little sister tagging along, aren’t quite as capable as Jean of solving mysteries. Scruggs, for good reason, befriends Jean and encourages Penny and Jack to also accept her and allow her full participation in their activities.

The plot thickens when, during a late night game of flashlight tag, the kids unearth old boxes and kegs which are filled with money. In the midst of serious danger, Jean comes to the rescue. The story has a good plot and moves ahead quickly. The facts about raising llamas and learning about some of their behaviors makes the book even more interesting.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Helen Hunter
Author/Freelance Writer
Cedar Rapids, Iowa


Though Rebecca is only ten years old, she reports to work as a “bobbin girl” at 4:30 a.m. at the cotton mill. Her job is to remove full bobbins of yarn from spinning frames and replace them with empty ones. The manual labor is done by women and young girls, while the men are overseers. The working environment is harsh. Hot, humid air with no ventilation creates a breeding ground for lung diseases which often sweep through the mill. Though it is against regulations, during spare moments the mill girls try to read or do math to improve their minds. The long work day ends thirteen and a half hours later.

One day the news is spread that wages are to be lowered. Judith, a very spirited woman and one whom Rebecca looks up to, is instrumental in banding the women together to refuse to work until wages and working conditions are improved. But the mill owners refuse to give in to the demands and slowly the women return to work because the little money they do get is sorely needed. Though Rebecca has to bid Judith goodbye since she refuses to give up, she tells Rebecca to not give up hope and to continue to stand up for what is right.

The Bobbin Girl, with its full page watercolor illustrations, is a concise and factual history about working in a textile factory during the 1800’s, and how the low wages, long hours, and poor conditions precipitated the beginning of workers’ strikes. The story is based on the memoirs of a mill girl during this time period. The strike, though not successful, was demonstrated peacefully, in contrast to the violence of later strikes.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Debbie Lindsay
Homeschool Parent
Eatonville, Washington


It starts with a cigar and a ten-year-old boy. In Point of No Return, Jimmy Barclay knew he shouldn’t try to smoke, but his best friend Tony is always able to persuade him, and trouble results. While Jimmy hangs out over the toilet bowl, Tony is in his room, belting out forbidden rock music. Then Mom and Dad come home, and Jimmy is on restriction again, this time maybe for life. Jimmy searches his conscience for someone other than himself to blame for his troubles, but admits to his mom it is he who is choosing to do wrong. Jimmy promises to reform.
Meanwhile, the kids’ pastor and his son Jacob from the church come over to ask Jimmy to the church youth club meeting. They challenge him to a basketball game of one on one; if Jacob wins, Jimmy has to come to church that night. Of course, Jacob wins, and Jimmy struggles unsuccessfully to find a way to break his promise. He goes and hears again that Jesus died just for him. This time it has meaning for Jimmy and he gives his life to Christ. Then his troubles really start. His Christian grandmother dies of cancer, his best friend Tony ridicules and mocks him, his helpful pastor and Jacob move. Jimmy feels alone, until he realizes that Jesus understands and is always there to help and guide.

This fast-paced adventure by Paul McCusker is a fun, easy read, and could be used successfully as a read-aloud. Its 125 pages contain lots of spiritual guidance, but it’s never preachy. McCusker includes realistic details, such as the fun games at the youth meeting and the firecracker explosion in the park, to which the older elementary reader can easily relate. The book cover of two boys racing away from the explosion in the park’s gazebo is eye-catching and colorful.

Erin has entered her prize pumpkin, so the day also holds the anticipation as well as excitement of receiving a ribbon at the fair. Since the ribbon she receives is for third prize, the book ends with dreams of next year’s prize-winning pumpkin. Going to the Fair will give a touch of nostalgia for all who have anticipated and received prizes at a fair. For others this can be a new and enjoyable experience.

By showing many activities and exhibits, the illustrations compliment the text to give quite a complete picture of a small community fair. Children will enjoy this book and many adults will be able to add experiences of their own when the story is finished. This book could be a valuable tool to introduce sharing time with students in school.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Marie Knaupp
Retired Librarian
Monmouth, Oregon


Sheryl McFarlane and Sheena Lott team up in their description of one long day at the fair. Sights, sounds, and smells are vividly portrayed in the experience of reading Going to the Fair. Adventure and humorous situations abound while this frog-boy searches for the kindly Prince who seems to have all the answers. In his search, he’s led to his lost father, Pin—a man at heart.

Jimmy’s personality goes through many changes as he becomes first a young boy then later returns to his former (and much preferred state) of a frog. His character is basically good but he matures and learns much of the world in his adventures, particularly as he discovers his father’s identity. And although that discovery is painful for him, he is able to accept it.

Although the subject matter of this book may sound “babysish” to middle schoolers, they most likely would find themselves drawn into the story and be entertained by it. The large print and many illustrations will also be appealing to reluctant readers.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Ceil Carey
Middle School Librarian
Plano, Illinois


Donna Jo Napoli has written an interesting take-off on an old fairy tale scenario in her book, Jimmy, the Pickpocket of the Palace. Beginning as it does with the young frog, Jimmy, yet unknissed by the princess, the story gets off to a rather slow start. But action picks up when Jimmy finds himself a human, yet with some frog-like characteristics and emotions.

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Seventh grader Jeff Wingate enjoys his home surrounded by the wilds along the northern shores of Lake Huron in Michigan. Out boating on a summer day Jeff finds a very seriously injured huge Doberman lying on the shore of one of the uninhabited islands. After much effort and ingenuity he is able to get the dog into the boat, race back home, and with the help of his older brother they take the dog to the vet. Scout recovers, to the amazement of everyone, and turns out to be a very well trained dog. But in spite of newspaper ads and calls to the police, no one claims the dog.

As the summer progresses Jeff and Scout become inseparable. The dog causes quite a stir in the community with his abilities that become more evident with a runaway horse at a horsemen’s competition. Suddenly a stranger in the crowd asks Jeff some very peculiar questions about Scout, and while they are driving by this same man as they leave the grounds, Scout becomes very agitated.

After a burglary incident several days later at their home which involves the police and a K-9 unit of the U.S. Special Forces Team, the dreaded day comes when Scout is claimed by the man who raised and trained Scout. Can Jeff trust God enough to do what is best for all three of them and be willing to accept the outcome?

Written in the first person, Julie Nye skillfully weaves dogs, horses, mystery, adventure, and spiritual lessons into this story, which makes it very appealing to a broad range of reading interests. The story focuses on how God uses people and circumstances in one’s life to grow them into the kind of person he wants them to become. The book also contains a few simple illustrations to enhance some of the more exciting incidents.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Emma’s Aunt Sue has come to live with them for the summer. Aunt Sue has cancer and she needs to live close to town for her daily chemotherapy treatments. Each day Emma watches her aunt grow weaker as the treatments take their toll. Some days all Aunt Sue has the strength to do is watch a little TV or read with Emma.

After the chemotherapy treatments are finished, Aunt Sue begins to slowly perk up as her strength and hair return, but by the end of summer her health takes a turn for the worse that even radiation therapy is unable to help.

Everyone realizes that Aunt Sue is dying. Emma wonders why God is letting her die when they have prayed daily for her health to be restored. Aunt Sue herself tries to help Emma understand that death for God’s people does not end life.

A very poignant story full of colorful illustrations that takes the young reader through the steps of the fear, pain, and emotions that family members must face as they watch a loved one suffer through a serious illness that ends in death. The author addresses the question as to why God does not always give us exactly what we pray for, but that he does promise he will never leave alone those who love him. The story concludes that Aunt Sue is now tan and strong, dancing around Jesus in heaven.

One afternoon as he’s working on the closet he collapses from the heat. Jenny calls emergency number and an ambulance takes her grandmother to the hospital. As she and her mother wait, Jenny asks God to take care of her grandmother. After her grandpa comes home from the hospital they talk about God’s care. Grandpa shows Jenny what Isaiah 46 says about God’s care from birth to old age. “Someday,” he says, “God will take care of me by taking me to heaven to be with him. But not just yet.”

Author Carolyn Nystrom does an excellent job of showing the friendship between Jenny and her grandmother. The characters have depth and appeal. Their conversations are true to life. The color illustrations are realistic and appear on or along side every page. The style and attention to detail in the 1930’s and 40’s “flashbacks,” as Grandpa is telling Jenny about his life, are especially appealing. Christian principles are taught through example and reference to the Bible.

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Everyone realizes that Aunt Sue is dying. Emma wonders why God is letting her die when they have prayed daily for her health to be restored. Aunt Sue herself tries to help Emma understand that death for God’s people does not end life.

A very poignant story full of colorful illustrations that takes the young reader through the steps of the fear, pain, and emotions that family members must face as they watch a loved one suffer through a serious illness that ends in death. The author addresses the question as to why God does not always give us exactly what we pray for, but that he does promise he will never leave alone those who love him. The story concludes that Aunt Sue is now tan and strong, dancing around Jesus in heaven.

One afternoon as he’s working on the closet he collapses from the heat. Jenny calls emergency number and an ambulance takes her grandmother to the hospital. As she and her mother wait, Jenny asks God to take care of her grandmother. After her grandpa comes home from the hospital they talk about God’s care. Grandpa shows Jenny what Isaiah 46 says about God’s care from birth to old age. “Someday,” he says, “God will take care of me by taking me to heaven to be with him. But not just yet.”

Author Carolyn Nystrom does an excellent job of showing the friendship between Jenny and her grandmother. The characters have depth and appeal. Their conversations are true to life. The color illustrations are realistic and appear on or along side every page. The style and attention to detail in the 1930’s and 40’s “flashbacks,” as Grandpa is telling Jenny about his life, are especially appealing. Christian principles are taught through example and reference to the Bible.
lives are changed when they can read God’s Word in their own language.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Donna Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon


One night, a strange thing happens for a young boy named Lonnie, when he hears the song of a Love Bird through his window. Before he can open the window to listen, the bird flies in and lands on his finger, then begins speaking to him in French. Lonnie is an orphan, but knows of a legend which says that a Love Bird can help you find your loved ones, and so he requests the bird’s help. Then the bird disappears, and Lonnie pushes his face to the window to find it, only to discover that he is now standing outside, in the streets of early 19th century Paris.

Thus begins Faith Ringgold’s **Bonjour, Lonnie,** which uses an Alice Through the Looking Glass type of theme to introduce children to some of the events in American history. As Lonnie follows the Love Bird, he is introduced to his grandfather, whom he discovers was black. Ringgold then traces the history of the 369th infantry, an all-black division of the United States army in W.W.I, and uses the grandfather character to explore the sometimes volatile issues of racial inequality and interracial marriage. Bonjour, Lonnie also gives readers a brief introduction to the language and culture of France, as well as a brief account of the black renaissance movement, which took place in Harlem right after W.W.I. Ringgold then traces that time line to W.W.II, where we learn that Lonnie’s mother was a Jew. Here readers are introduced to The Holocaust, and we discover how Lonnie became an orphan.

**Bonjour, Lonnie,** which was illustrated by the author, combines a complex story line with childlike, folksy imagery, in a way that is intimate and sensitive. One almost gets the feeling that they are peering into a family’s photo album, learning about the details of Lonnie’s ancestry at the same time he is learning. While the story covers a broad expanse of history, Ringgold’s careful relating of world events to Lonnie’s personal family roots helps keep those events in focus. This is truly a unique work.

For those who are looking for a way to help children show more sensitivity to people of mixed ancestry, this book may provide a good starting point.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 4

Virginia Schnabel
Freelance Writer
Shelton, Washington


Ten-year-old Ying is excited about the possibility of going on her first overnight school camping trip. Only two obstacles stand in her way: money and her grandmother. As her guardian, Ying’s grandmother is reticent to allow Ying to go camping, it’s for boys only, she says. But Ying convinces her grandmother to give her a chance to earn her way.

Ying learns to make fences, which she eventually sells at the marketplace. In between times, Ying gets accused of stealing a fellow classmate’s money, until a little crippled girl is found to be the culprit. Guilt rises deeply in Ying, for she never talked to Cripple Yip. Now Cripple Yip is forced out of school and drowns a few days later. To make restitution, Ying tries to communicate with Cripple Yip’s grandmother and buys a half-dead chicken from the old woman with her earnings from the fences she has sold. Ying’s family is furious with her until a kindly teacher gives Ying a lesson in understanding and helps those around Ying to see her kindness.

This book causes several concerns. Throughout the text, Ying’s grandmother teaches her the superstitions of her religion and acts in irrational ways. When Ying does the right thing, her grandmother does not applaud her, rather, she scolds and punishes Ying. As a concerned parent, I would consider sharing this book with my children only if I read it with them and helped explain the philosophical differences.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 3

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


Stumpy, a little red squirrel, makes a new nest in a pin oak tree in Gooseberry Park, rearranging all her treasures to make room for her growing family. Her old friends who live with retired Professor Albert—Kona, the loyal Labrador retriever, and Gwendolyn, the wise hermit crab in a fishbowl—talk excitedly about the imminent birth of Stumpy’s babies. Even Murray, a comical bat who introduces himself to Stumpy the first night in her new home (as he chomps on a Mars bar), shares Stumpy’s enthusiasm.

Three beautiful babies fill Stumpy’s waiting nest. Murray brings egg rolls (one of his favorite foods), and Kona visits daily. Suddenly a late spring storm freezes Gooseberry Park. Trees crack and crash to the ground under the weight of ice. Kona rescues Stumpy’s babies from her fallen home, carrying them to the warmth of Professor Albert’s basement. But no one can find Stumpy. Kona nearly gives up hope of finding her after several treacherous trips across the ice to the park, injuring himself in the search for his friend.

Stumpy’s friends converge at the Professor’s house and devise a scheme to bring Stumpy back to her babies. Gwendolyn gives advice, Murray eats everything in sight and watches his favorite TV programs, and Kona works out a deal with a weasel. The plan succeeds. Stumpy, reunited with her children, makes a new home in the park.

Children will enjoy the special friendships developed in the story among an unusual assortment of animal characters. Murray’s antics fill the book with laughable humor. Readers will find familiar brand names—Oreos, Walkman—and TV programs—Hard Copy, Jeopardy, Days of Our Lives. They will learn interesting facts about animals: how slowly an owl turns his head, that each giraffe’s markings are unique, and that Labradors can endure very cold temperatures and extreme pain.

The author sensitively shows a mother’s nesting instincts and prenatal excitement, the sacredness of birth, and the responsibilities, hard work, and fatigue of young motherhood.

Gwendolyn supposes that she was a sheep or a hawk in a previous life and has been reincarnated seventeen times. At one point in the story she reads everyone’s palms.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 4

Rhonda Marie Lackey
Freelance Writer, Retired Teacher/Librarian
Tukwila, Washington


Following years of persecution and famine, thousands of Beta Israel people from the high mountains of Ethiopia are air-lifted to begin a new life in Israel. In the book **When I Left My Village** Maxine Rose Schur describes the difficult journey of one family as they walk alone for many days, then escape guards as they cross the border into Sudan. After weeks of waiting in a refugee camp, the family is finally included in a secret air-lift and they set their feet on Israeli soil.

Menelick and his family feel they are in paradise now as they receive a clean hut, plenty of good food, and the opportunity to attend school all day. The events of this story are true to the actual history of Jewish people in Ethiopia making this book an excellent resource when studying these countries.

A moving story with fabulous black and white illustrations portrays the varied feelings of Menelick and Semba, his brother, as their father and mother courageously guide, protect, and encourage them through fear and despair to final...
Ellen Schwartz writes a fast moving, high energy novel. Starshine is an eleven-year-old problems with slang, however; Starlight's mom explains she felt feelings of inferiority, frustration, and jealousy with the Y oung Einstein's quiz show, but muffs the outcome. Meanwhile, her experiments with Goldy-legs are in difficulties. After initial success testing the tensile strength of Goldy-legs’ webs using tennis balls, Starshine changes the spider’s diet, and the golden webs fail. In tears she talks out her problems with the mom worries and is upset and his dad, so he looks for mysteries to solve. He winged jaguar, Mike goes on. He clings to the web—his hands with the web. He is interviewed on the TV nightly news! Starshine achieves all three of her goals.

Ellen Schwartz writes a fast moving, entertaining, very readable book with an appealing heroine who faces realistic twelve-year-old problems. Her interaction with her parents is spontaneous and joyful. The creative use of language and dialogue helps speed the reader to the surprise conclusion. There are no problems with slang, however; Starlight’s mom uses profanity three times on one page when the maggots fall into the cookie dough. This book will grab the reader’s attention from the first page.


Teenagers Mike, Ben, Winnie, and Spence, living in the desert town of Ambrosia call themselves the “Last Chance Detectives.” Always on the lookout for a mystery to explore, the four friends find one when a prospector is attacked by Bigfoot and his stash of gold, stolen. A short time later Mike and his grandfather, owner of the Last Chance Gas and Tow, are called to rescue a pick-up truck that has overturned on the highway. While looking around the area, Mike finds a clump of coarse, dark brown hair caught in a barbed wire fence—hair from something that even the local veterinarian can’t identify. Could it be from the legendary Bigfoot?

While carrying out the search, Mike rescues a dog that is suffering from neglect, but belongs to the prospector. Now he must make a hard choice about the dogs’ future. Is it right to keep the stolen dog and care for him, or must Mike return him to his owner and perhaps see the dog suffer more neglect? Mike’s mom and his dad’s old Bible help Mike make the right decision and trust God with the outcome.

Authors Jake and Luke Thoenes do an excellent job of catching and holding a reader’s interest. The side story concerning the fate of the prospector’s dog give readers an opportunity to think about right and wrong from a biblical perspective.


I found Dear Terry particularly fun since Joyce, the main character in the story, moves to Cedar Rapids, Iowa (the city where I live) and attends Prairie Schools. It was fun to see two young friends get acquainted through the nearly-lost-art of letter writing. Their letters back and forth reveal their thoughts and feelings about their families. Joyce is a Christian and is bold to write about her faith and her family’s involvement in their church. It was Joyce’s grandmother who encouraged her to get a pen pal. She is very close to her grandmother and doesn’t want to move to Iowa because she knows she may never see her Grannie again. Joyce has three older sisters and a younger brother. Joyce tells about their Christmas and the gifts they receive, and the traditions her family follows. The many mentions of prayer for Grannie are sweet and would be an encouragement for any unbeliever.

Terry is an only-child, but unlike Joyce, is privileged to get both a puppy and a horse during the writing of letters back and forth. Terry names the puppy “Muffie” which was my first clue that Terry might not be a girl. The reader can assume that Terry’s mother is a Christian based on what real: the mom worries and is upset and his friends give the rescue effort their all. The only illustration is on the front cover and is of a boy and his dog, overlaid with symbols of some of the action in the story.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Judy Belcher
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


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Terry writes about her, and because she is so ill, both Terry and “her” father begin to think about God.

As the pen pals exchange letters throughout more than a year, Terry and “her” father both trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. Terry and Joyce make plans to meet each other and their families during the summer. It becomes necessary for Terry to send a photo to Joyce and confess that he isn’t a girl as Joyce has believed all along. But by this time they like one another so much that it doesn’t matter to either of them.

A wonderful encouragement for young people to have pen pals and to write more than “How are you? I am fine.” in their correspondence. This kind of letter writing not only acquaints young people with other family’s cultures and traditions, but with the faith and trust in God that one young person openly shares with her new friend.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Helen Hunter
Freelance Writer
Cedar Rapids, Iowa


As soon as ten-year-old Katie Crawford hears about the new girl in town, she decides that Renee would make a great new friend. Renee always seems to be the best at everything she does. She’s even been on TV! When Renee chooses to spend time with Katie, it makes Katie feel very special. But Renee isn’t as nice to everyone. She makes fun of Tracy because Tracy isn’t as smart or athletic as some of the children. And she refuses to be around Louis who has Down’s Syndrome. If Katie wants to stay friends with Renee she will have to choose between her old friends and this new one.

Susan Walley has done a good job of portraying children with handicaps and the responses of others in relation to them. She shows the struggle in Katie’s life as Katie tries to do what is right and still be friends with someone who disagrees with her.

The illustrations and cover art are fair. Inside illustrations are black and white drawings. The cover is in color, but the colors seem bland and lacking in sharp contrast.

Scripture verses are used in Katie’s family devotional time. The version chosen is rather stilted language for young readers but the intent of the verses is explained by the characters. These verses are used to help Katie understand and resolve some of the problems she is facing.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Donna Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon


Henry, Violet, Jessie, and Benny Alden live with their grandfather and his housekeeper, Mrs. McGregor. They had lived in an old boxcar after the death of their parents. Their grandfather found them and brought them to live with him. They love him very much. This episode, *The Mystery at the Fair* created by Gertrude Chandler Warner, begins with the children wanting to buy grandfather something special for his birthday. They find a wonderful book that they know he would like, and they need to raise $50 in less than a week to pay for it. They decide to enter various items in a contest in the county fair to try to win the money. In the process, they make some new friends and discover who has been ruining various displays at the fair. They are given the reward money for their efforts and are able to buy the gift for their grandfather.

The action of the story is carried in the dialogue. The characters and the plot seem fairly simplistic and stereotypical with many coincidences. Four siblings with a wide age range play and plan together throughout. They get to know a new neighbor because they help her find her lost little brother, who just happens to be the same age as Benny. Each have talents that are capable of winning in different categories at the fair. The guilty party obviously looks uncomfortable at the appropriate times. Many kids today could not relate the smallness of the old time county fair and the fact that everyone seems to know everyone, except for the stranger (whom the kids spoke to in the beginning without hesitation).

A few well done black and white sketches illustrate the text and make it clear that new friends are black. This effort feels a little forced, as the relationships all seem shallow and race does not seem relevant in any way and is not spoken about (like someone is trying to be politically correct).

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4

Judy Belcher
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


A fun adventure with an equally fun and endearing heroine, Herculeah Jones. The daughter of a private detective and a police sergeant; this young girl has mystery solving in her blood. Herculeah also has a faithfully, loyal sidekick in Meat (nicknamed for his voracious appetite).

It seems as though mysteries find their way to Herculeah on a regular basis. She has a sense of...
danger inbred in her...each time she enters a potentially risky situation. Herculeah’s hair frizzes and stands on end. In this story, she has just purchased a secondhand coat and finds a deadly letter in its lining (her hair frizzes). As she begins trying to locate the owner of this coat, Herculeah finds herself almost run down by a black car, chased by a Doberman, and held captive by the killer himself. Not one to be daunted by mere trivial events, Herculeah eventually solves the mystery and the crime.

As enjoyable as this book is, our heroine does stretch the truth at times and overrides her parents’ rules to succeed in solving her case. Herculeah’s friend Meat also talks about Halloween and the subject of Herculeah’s parents’ divorce is passed over lightly.


Although the Putnam family live on a pleasant farm in a valley of New Hampshire, Mr. Putnam knew that there was better land in the west than their worn-out, stony soil. After much discussion, Mr. and Mrs. Putnam tell their two children, Carolina and her older brother, Mark, that they will sell their farm and travel to a much better farming site far off in Nebraska.

After a long, cold winter, when signs of spring are beginning to show, the farm is sold. Now the family must make arduous and difficult decisions regarding what supplies they can take with them in the huge covered wagon. Tools, food for the trip, household furnishings, building supplies and items to make repairs on the wagon, are necessities. The children are told by their father that they may take only one item of their own, and it is mighty hard indeed for Carolina to leave her doll furniture behind, but she knows that her dearest possession, her doll, Lydia Lou, must go. Even Mrs. Putnam has to leave her beloved mantel clock behind, as the two oxen which will pull their wagon, must not be overloaded or the family’s arrival in Nebraska would be in peril.

Neighbors of the Putnams see them off with warm wishes, and some prepared foods to help them with their first day’s meals. Soon the Putnams settle into a traveling routine of twenty to thirty miles a day, thanks to the steady, strong oxen team. They meet interesting people along the way, and sometimes stop for a few days to rest the oxen, refresh themselves, and make needed repairs. Six days a week they travel, with a stop on Sundays, for Mr. Putnam insists that one day a week belongs to the Lord. Frequent referrals in the story to the family’s faith and dependence on God, show how they feel strengthened to face the unknown.

Carolina likes the travel, helping her mother, and being with her family. One time, during a stop on the banks of the Platte River, she is challenged to make a heart-rending decision, which will have far-reaching results.

Author Elizabeth Yates captures the conflicting emotions that pioneer families must have experienced when leaving the known, comfortable existence for the lure and promise of the unknown. Contemplating the hard decisions that the family must make on what is to go and what is to be left behind, puts the reader into their shoes.

Not many of the hardships of the trip are described. Carolina’s many conversations with her doll might not appeal to the boys. This story would interest any child, particularly girls who like pioneer stories. Illustrations by Nora Unwin lend a great deal to the narrative.


When Biddy, a tiny, black, seemingly stillborn lamb is resuscitated, she wins her way into Peter’s heart and care. Mountain Born is the story of the life of a shepherd-child, his special relationship with one lamb, and of his growing up.

“The year had hinges on which it hung, and every hinge had something to do with the sheep: but that was the life on [Peter’s] farm and the living growing up. Despite the dangers, Peter’s farm is a wonderfully safe place for a boy to become a man—and for a reader to escape to.

Mountain Born is a book to savor. Simple yet symbolic, Elizabeth Yates’ style of writing causes the reader to slow down, enjoy, and ponder. Her delicate balance of plot, place, character, and theme makes Mountain Born a delicious bit of reading.


Elizabeth Yates paints another gentle portrait of a young boy growing up in Mountain Born’s sequel, A Place for Peter. When his mother leaves to care for his ailing uncle, Peter finds many of her responsibilities falling on him. Eager to prove himself to his reluctant father, Peter embraces the challenge.

First, he handles the sugaring up in the sugar bush alone. Then, encouraged by his success, Peter moves on to the more difficult tasks his father would normally handle. He determines to cut a path around the mountain to a neighboring farm. Despite a rattlesnake bite, Peter finishes his work and earns his father’s respect and, upon her return, his mother’s admiration.

Through well chiseled and nicely polished characters, Yates purveys the struggle to grow, the struggle to release, and the love, respect, and commitment of family. Yates’ love and reverence for the land enriches the story and her firsthand knowledge of farm life adds authenticity. Faith, wisdom, and devotion are some of the threads woven into this gentle book. Two dozen black and white illustrations by Nora Unwin enhance the story.


Mountain Born’s sequel, A Place for Peter, invites young readers to step into the shoes of a young boy in the Old West.
READING THE RIGHT STUFF
TEACHING KIDS TO CHOOSE WISELY

by Michele Howe

A friend showed me the bargain she had gotten at a local garage sale; a boxload of books for a couple of dollars. As she began to pull the various paperbacks from the cardboard box, I noticed a popular selling series. I took a closer look at the cover which depicted hideous skeletal beings and other assorted eerie, nameless creatures. It gave me the shivers and rightly so, since the trade name for this series is “Goosebumps”.

My initial reaction was what parent in their right mind would allow children to read these kinds of books? Sadly, for lack of time (and energy), many parents do not monitor the types of reading material which gets into their kids’ hands and stays in their kids’ minds.

As parents, we need to consistently assess the influences which contribute to our children’s mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being. In a society such as ours, we would do well to remember, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.” Proverbs 23:7. Before our kids “check ‘em out,” we better be sure we already have.

* Learn where to shop. Give kids the opportunity to buy books at a local Christian book store. Order Christian discount catalogs such as Christian Book Distributors (508-977-5000). Or subscribe to the Christian Library Journal (541-479-5277) which provides reading incentive ideas as well as quality books. In safe places like these, kids can pick and choose freely. Parents can relax too, knowing that other like-minded adults have previously read and reviewed the materials offered.

* Frequent the libraries with list in hand of known and trusted authors. Request the books through Inter-Library-Loan if your branch does not have the titles you desire.

* Choose unfamiliar authors or new series with care. Read the inside and back cover. Check the computer to find out what other titles the same author has written. If one series is questionable, then another may be too. Frequently, the message is the same; it’s just been watered down for a younger age group. Ask yourself questions like: “Does the hero/ heroine act in ways I would want my child to emulate?” “What is the message of this book?” “Will my child learn a positive lesson from reading this?”

* Read together as a family. Choose series books like: Chronicles of Narnia, Anne of Green Gables, Little House on the Prairie. Read together each evening; then celebrate the completion of the set by having a video party. Rent or borrow the videos of the same stories. Have popcorn, pop and candy...just like at the movies.

* When persistent requests come from a child to read books you’re not certain your child is mature enough to understand, read one with your child. Then ask your child pointed questions regarding the characters and their motivations, their actions and beliefs. Don’t forget to challenge them to find the message hidden within the book’s pages. Postpone the coveted series for six months or a year if your child isn’t ready. Then go back and try the process again.

Michele Howe is a freelance writer living in LaSalle, Michigan with her husband Jim (a public high school instructor) and their four homeschooled children.
BOOK REVIEWS


As a storybook paraphrase of the Bible, My Mommy and Me Story Bible is adequate. There are some minor (and infrequent major) inaccuracies in the biblical stories. Mostly this comes from simplifying and shortening the stories. The author includes the biblical references to each of the stories which would allow the parent to explain the story more fully later in life. Included with each reading is an activity to involve the child in the story. Younger children will be entertained by the activities.

The illustrations are excellent full-color drawings with intriguing details which will keep most children captivated.

Janyre Stockinger
Freelance Writer
Grand Rapids, Michigan


Devotions can be dangerous to your health...spiritual health, that is! Dangerous in that these devotions promise to take the reader where he’s never gone before—taking him on an adventure of new depths of understanding both himself and God’s Word.

Though black-line graphics entertain the curious reader, parental preview and guidance is encouraged. Selected chapters from each New Testament book are used, but parents should be aware of the obvious author perspective. The major weakness of this book is the intermingling of a loose paraphrase type of Bible story presentation and the author’s beliefs and personal assumptions. A young reader would not be able to distinguish a difference between Bible truth and human opinion. The reader is told at the start of each selection to seek God’s help as this journey is being taken. And the end has Bible reading suggestions with a question or two to make personal application.

A page toward the front gives readers an idea as to what each graphic cue means before using the book.

There is no index to provide quick topical reference, but there is an incomplete appendix used by the author as a platform to present personal spiritual beliefs.

Janyre Stockinger
Freelance Writer
Grand Rapids, Michigan


Three thousand years ago the history of Jerusalem began. Almost from the beginning it divided into two streams—the actual and the legendary. Renowned folklorist Howard Schwartz has combined the two streams into a celebration of 3000 years of Jewish imagination. So many adventures and people to meet; for instance: Old Testament stories with a fairy tale twist; a bird who guides a poor Jewish family on their own special exodus; the original for Rudyard Kipling’s Just-So-Story wherein King Solomon can speak with the animals; a vampire demon; Serah, who has lived longer than Methuselah; a miracle, wrought through a poor man’s offering to God; the miraculous chair that was also a jigsaw puzzle.

Seeking to make this book worthy of Jerusalem’s unique history, both the author and illustrator have given it a special look. Rainbow colors slowly fade into each other as the pages progress. Sidebars on almost every page explain the legends and history, giving you at least three readings in the one book: the stories, the sidebars, and a worthwhile but eye boggling attempt at reading the two together. Just as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien before him, Howard Schwartz realizes that fairy tales can teach great truths. He uses the sidebars to introduce these truths and how they apply to the reader. Imagination is inspired by the beautiful, earth toned watercolors that accompany every story. These illustrations will help enlarge the adventure of reading to yourself. Because many of the stories are from oral tradition, and all are written in rich language Next Year... lends itself to the wonderful experience of inspired reading out loud.

There is a helpful glossary of unfamiliar words. Each story’s derivation is listed at the end of the story as well as in the source list. During this time of special celebration in Jerusalem Next Year... is a very timely book. It will be welcomed by Jews and Gentiles who look forward to “next year in Jerusalem.”

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan
The childhood of Harriet Tubman becomes lively historical fiction under the pen of author Alan Schroeder and through the expert brush of Caldecott Medalist Jerry Pinkney, who drew on his research from other illustrating projects to paint a beautiful yet historically accurate backdrop. While the narrative itself is fiction, the basic facts on which the story is set are derived from what is known of the childhood of Underground Railroad conductor, Harriet Tubman.

Young Harriet, christened Araminta and thus the nickname Minty, is a headstrong and stubborn house slave on the Brodas plantation in Maryland during the 1820's. As a result of several defiant acts and consequent demotions to the low position of field slave, Minty determines to run away to freedom. Minty's mother, Old Rit, advises "If your head is in the lion's mouth, it's best to put him a little. Your head's in his mouth, Minty, but you sure ain't 'doin' any patta'n'. You're just fixin' to get your head bit off...Pat the lion, Minty. It ain't gonna kill you." Minty follows this advice for a time but never gives up the idea of running for freedom. Realizing this, her father, Old Ben, begins teaching her survival skills like reading the stars and moss on trees and learning to swim. All the while Minty watches for her chance to run. The climax of the story comes when Minty is given the opportunity, though fleeting, to make her break for freedom. Her subsequent loss of courage sends her back to her cabin in tears, discouraged with her weakness but with the determination to hold on to her dream of freedom.

Minty presents the young reader with not only a view of the slave life of a young child in the pre-Civil War days, but also with the moral struggle of the slave, at any age, whether to stay and bend to the will of a master who is unjust or whether to defy the authorities at any cost. This story could be the beginning of a great discussion on obedience versus justice for older children. A one page afterword to the story briefly recounts Harriet Tubman's life as an adult slave, her eventual escape and consequent tireless efforts with the Underground Railroad.

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington


With a collection of short stories, interspersed with carols and verses, Treasury of Christmas shares the message of Christmas in unique ways. Some of the selected stores are based on the biblical Christmas story. In the "Four Wise Man," Artaban does not make it to worship Jesus, as he is compelled to use his beautiful jewels to help needy people as he makes his way to see Jesus. In the end he realizes that when we help people in need, we are serving Jesus. Not all of the stories focus on the Christmas story, but all follow the themes of sharing, helping, and caring for others. Boboshka, a story about a lady who gives gifts to sick and unhappy children, is taken from a traditional Russian story. Other stories take place in France, Poland, and Italy, giving the book an international flavor.

Robert Van De Weyer, the compiler of this collection of stories, made sure that every story contained a message that could be discussed and applied to the lives of children and adults. In "Papa Panov’s Visitors," a story from Leo Tolstoy, we are reminded that when we help others, it is as if we were serving Jesus. The stories and carols are attractively illustrated and care has been taken to include multicultural characters. The illustrator, Deborah Kindred, was successful in showing pleasant expressions on the characters which add to the stories. This will be a useful book for those who need short, thought provoking stories to share around Christmas.

Quality - 5  § Acceptability - 4
Lynnette Sorenson
Librarian, Northwest College
Kirkland, Washington


"Dying ain’t important. Everybody does that. What matters is how well you do your living." These words are attributed to the African-American folk hero John Henry. According to legend, he worked on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad in West Virginia and died after hammering out a tunnel while racing against a steam drill. As the tale explains: "He had hammered so hard and so fast and so long that his big heart had burst."

Newbery Honor winner Julius Lester has the unique distinction of having performed his own version of the legendary ballad as a former folk singer. He also draws upon historical sources, which are credited in the opening introduction. The text is skillfully playful, inviting one to read it aloud. There’s plenty of nonsense that kids love, too, such as “he laughed so loud, the sun got scared,” and “he was so fast, the wind was out of breath trying to keep up with him,” and best of all, the mountain that he challenged in the end was “as big as hurt feelings.”

But what makes this book an undeniable winner are the superb watercolor illustrations by three-time Caldecott Honor Book artist, Jerry Pinkney. His style, reminiscent of Norman Rockwell, add depth and quality to each page.

This tale can be used to introduce children to many issues: the history of railroads, what life was like for African-American men and women in the 1870’s, slavery, American ballads, and story-telling.

u Quality - 5  § Acceptability - 5
Kim Swanson Gollnick
Writer, Editor
Marysville, Washington

*
with a beautiful, color painting. Each painting also includes many other items that being with a specific letter. Everything is centered around life on the prairie. For example, the letter B is, “Our Belgians, Bill and Bob, bed in the barn.” The subjects range from home, garden, crops, transportation, etc. At the end is a list of all of the many words that can be found in the picture that begin with a particular letter. There is also a section which explains each situation illustrated and any items that may be unfamiliar.

Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet uses very clever text to give you a real feel for life on the farm and the prairie. The illustrations by Yvette Moore are beautiful paintings with great detail, vivid and bold colors. Each painting is like a look and find picture. The items are right in front of you, but you can’t figure out the proper term that begins with the right letter. The information at the end of the book is very helpful. You will learn a lot of information and begin to feel as if you really understand the prairie. A delightful hardbound book with a sturdy library binding. This book will be around for many years to come.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Marcia Snyder
Librarian, Valley Christian School
Missoula, Montana


Ever wonder where a particular expression came from? Speculate no longer. Scholastic Dictionary of Idioms is here with a compilation of over 600 different phrases. This more than 200-page volume provides more than just the definition of old and new sayings. It also gives us the origin and the history behind those witty sayings we frequently use without a clue as to where the phrase derived.

Take the timeless saying, “Get your goat;” this saying means “…to annoy very badly; to make a person angry.” It comes from an American expression from the early 1900’s when it was customary to place a goat inside a racehorse’s stall to help calm the animal. If you wanted to “get someone’s goat,” you’d sneak in and remove the goat, thereby causing the horse to become upset.

Each phrase is listed in alphabetical order and then categorized separately by Key Word Index at the back of the book. A key word is listed along with several other possible words to check if you’re trying to remember a certain saying and not sure what word it begins with.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Marcia Snyder
Librarian, Valley Christian School
Missoula, Montana


Ms. Frizzle is at it again! Her class is learning about weather. Absolutely everything in the classroom is about rain, snow, sun, or wind. All the kids are doing a weather project and today the class is going on a field trip to the weather station. Ready or not, off they go in their school bus. No, wait, that’s not a school bus, it’s a hot air balloon. The class learns the basic lesson that hot air rises. This is applied to many weather principles such as the forming of clouds and also hurricanes. Of course, the class now finds themselves caught in the middle of one. The bus suddenly turns into an airplane and flies straight into the eye of the storm. When the class has sufficiently experienced the principles of weather first hand, everything is back to normal and they are at the weather station.

Joanna Cole has done it again. This latest story in the adventures of the Magic School Bus lives up to its reputation. The facts in the book are accurate and well researched. Ms. Cole has put them in an easy-to-read format. Many facts are also scattered throughout the book in the form of school reports done by Ms. Frizzle’s class. These books are, of course, not a solo effort. Bruce Degen makes the facts fun to learn with his bright, captivating illustrations. He includes every little detail to add more meaning to the story. Pay close attention to the changing outfits of Ms. Frizzle, especially the shoes and the earrings. The author and illustrator are definitely a masterful team. This is a beautiful hardbound book with a reinforced library binding. The book is especially nice for youngsters to read because it will lay flat when opened.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Marcia Snyder
Librarian, Valley Christian School
Missoula, Montana


“Where do Babies come from?” If you cringe at the thought of these words, Life Before Birth by Gary Parker is the ultimate answer! This Scripture-based dialogue between a mom, dad, and child traces the journey from cell to birth, emphasizing God’s plan and purpose for each life. Jonathon Chong and Lloyd Hight use colorful thought provoking cartoon type pictures to illustrate a baby’s growth, compare and refute evolutionist and abortionist theories, show what DNA, sperm, egg, and birth defects are all about.

Written by a doctor, but simplified for children and adult readers, this book brings together scientific data and biblical input to explain God’s plan and purpose for each life. This is an impressive book that should be read by parents over again and again to help children feel special and planned, not an accident of nature. This scripture based text will be an asset to parents and teachers everywhere as they approach the delicate task of sharing God’s plan for each child. Each child is truly “knit together” and “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Paula Stewart Marks
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon


Esther Watson describes her autistic sister, Christa. She tells what Christa likes, how she communicates, and how it is hard for other people to understand Christa. This is a loving presentation of someone who is different, but no less valuable. This book can be helpful in acquainting children with autism.

Talking to Angels is illustrated by the author. The illustrations, while not particularly attractive, are
Haystack is a circular story which illustrates the cycle of one haystack from plant, to harvest, then to shelter and food for farm animals, and then finally to fertilizer for the next crop. Children will be fascinated by the many purposes farmers had for one haystack. In this present age of disposable products, this story is a good reminder of how we can find different uses for one item. Haystack is also a good tool for teaching about seasons and plants.

Bonnie Geisert’s descriptive words with accurate farm terminology add to the beautiful color etchings of Arthur Geisert. Children will first be drawn to the large detailed illustrations of farm life and machinery of years past. Then the story of the haystack will teach children new vocabulary such as “swath, hydraulic lift, and windrows” as well as encourage a greater understanding of farm life, especially how farmers are affected by weather and the change in seasons. Haystack would be an informative as well as attractive addition to any children’s library.

Choosing a pet is like choosing a new member of the family. In order to become a good pet owner, children should be familiar with the specific needs a pet has. This excellent resource will help a child decide on the best pet for his or her situation. Frances Chrystie’s wealth of information provides answers to questions on diseases and first aid. Did you know that a common aspirin could kill a cat? Or that brown wax in a cat’s ear indicates ear mites? Or that specializing in diagnosing and repairing injured birds is like choosing the right place for a bird, clean a fish tank, and feed a snake.

Besides learning about different animals and their characteristics, care and training, this handbook provides a section on common diseases and first aid. Did you know that a common aspirin could kill a cat? Or that brown wax in a cat’s ear indicates ear mites? Or that guinea pigs and rabbits can get hair balls? This section is given as a supplement, not an alternative to veterinarian help. Overall, anyone who enjoys animals will find this book informative and interesting.

Follow the captivating story of an injured eagle’s journey from its discovery in a ditch to a specialized hospital that X-rays, operates, and provides a place of healing and recovery. Finally, enjoy the satisfaction of all involved when the eagle is well and ready for freedom. Emergency treatment is the norm for the Gabbert Raptor Center, located at the University of Minnesota. Specializing in diagnosing and repairing injured raptors, the center provides a unique unit of veterinarian doctors and volunteers dedicated to returning injured raptors to the wild.

Twice a year the public is invited to special release ceremonies to enjoy the eagles return to freedom. Indian drums in the release ceremony remind people that the eagle is traditionally considered a powerful spiritual force in Indian history.

Sylvia Johnson uses the eagle story to introduce her readers to raptors and shares fascinating tidbits of information about these birds that specialize in killing their own prey. Find out how many raptors exist; how they get injured, and how injury can be avoided. When a bird is injured what steps lead to rehabilitation? Why are exercise flights necessary? How can a tail feather be replaced? Bright colored, sharp photography by Ron Winch enhances the story. This informative book will be an asset for all young bird and animal lovers.

Why do people choose homeschooling? Today more and more parents are deciding to take responsibility for how and what their children are learning. Every state allows some homeschooling, and there are now about one million homeschoolers in the United States. Julie Voetberg’s book aims at the homeschooler, not as unique or different, but showing homeschooling as a positive normal alternative means of education.

Written from a nine-year-old’s perspective, Teigen, a young farm girl in Washington State, shares her daily activities. Taasha Owen’s hand-tinted photographs capture the everyday life of the homeschooler. Up at seven to do chores, practice the piano, and then begin regular school work. Although many regular workbooks are used, homeschooling provides special advantages: working at your own pace, projects in the kitchen and outside, close family involvement, and less structure. Sometimes planning takes a backseat to emergencies, or special teachable moments, like finding frog eggs or owl pellets, or going to work with dad. Sometimes homeschool students get together for special classes or activities or field trips.

Homeschool students will enjoy this book that shows their type of education as valuable and acceptable. This would also be a good book for those around homeschoolers who are not convinced that homeschooling is a workable alternative.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Paula Stewart Marks
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon


Everyday objects…what are they made of? How do they get put together? George Jones answers these questions by taking a step by step journey into the production of each item. This book is like taking a field trip to each company. Did you know that crayons are basically wax and colored powder heated to 240 degrees and poured into molds? Or that footballs are flat pieces of tanned leather stamped, designed, then filled with a bladder? These and other fascinating tidbits are some of the details that take the puzzle out of ordinary things. Bright detailed photographs follow each item step by step to give you a “You are there” feeling. See factories, machines, and the people who run the machines that make these real objects.

Teachers and parents will find this a useful resource in planning short science or history units. Students will be captivated by the bright pictures and interesting machines.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Paula Stewart Marks
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon


Creative fun for two to six-year-olds is the theme for this book. A book that helps to celebrate family and friends, holidays and special events. Judy Press suggests craft projects, games to play, books to read, gifts to make, and both indoor and outdoor activities. All activities are incorporated into a central theme for whole learning. There are over eighty projects with two pages devoted to each one. Easy to follow directions and diagrams are included, along with the necessary patterns. Accompanying each project is a section called “More big fun” which gives ideas for related activities. Each craft project can be created from many recyclable items or scraps. An index and page of additional resources is also included.

This book is thoughtfully put together with little ones in mind. There are very specific directions for general rules of safety, especially concerning items that will require adult supervision. Loretta Breen’s illustrations are delightful. The bright, cheery faces of children are on every page in a black and white sketch format. Preschool teachers, Sunday School teachers, and school teachers alike will find this book a great resource. The hand-puppets out of socks are especially adorable. Each project lends itself to variations that will make this book useful for years to come.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Marcia Snyder
Librarian, Valley Christian School
Mosscaula, Montana


From what type of life did American Gothic spring? Duggleby’s text and the liberal use of Wood’s own works tell the story of a truly American creative life. The very readable text chronicles Wood’s life and struggles as a misfit student, a poor farm boy, and his rise as teacher/artist, and his patronage of Stone City as well as his final prominence as a truly American art treasure.

Although short, this work is a very pleasing introduction to Wood’s life and works. More detailed treatment is covered in Garwood’s *Artist in Iowa: a Life of Grant Wood (1971)* and the International Film Bureau video set entitled, *Grant Wood, His Life and Paintings* (1984), both of which, however, are aimed at a much higher interest level (Gr. 10- Adult).

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Henry Terrill
Serials Librarian, Harding University
Searcy, Arkansas


Wah Ming Chang

It’s like meeting an old, revered friend, to read *Wah Ming Chang* by Gail Blasser Riley. Overcoming the hardships of bigotry and polio, Chang amazed the visual arts world with his list of credits: “etcher, painter, puppeteer, costumer, creator of special effects, filmmaker and sculptor.” From the time he was seven to the present, Chang never ceases to explore the cutting edge of the possibilities in art. He is also responsible for many American advertising symbols, such as the Pillsbury Dough Boy. This book especially interests the Sci-Fi buff.

Dave Bing

Dave Bing by Elizabeth Schleichert is the story about being a good citizen. Dave Bing is a role model, a dedicated student at Syracuse University, a team player for the Detroit Pistons, an entrepreneur, founding multiple businesses with an employee base that is 80% Afro-American, a community leader, fund-raising for charities and working with children through organizations such as Big Brothers of America.

Mary Carter Smith

Even a gift carefully chosen and lovingly given may not be accepted. That incident, based on the shade of a child’s skin, was the gateway into the life of choices for Mary Carter Smith. And her choices included becoming a school teacher, the springboard for her “other” career as an American “griot,” a living dictionary knowing the history of her Black ancestors. *Mary Carter Smith* by Babs Bell Hajdusiewicz is a must-read.
for Afro-American children in spite of some mature subject matter. (Murders of Carter's mother and son.) Multicultural junior biographies are well-written, covering the salient points of the subject's life, showing that even through grave difficulties, the human spirit rises to triumph. Unfamiliar words are explained in the body of the text. The interest is high, the vocabulary low, making this series a good choice for the older student with a limited reading vocabulary. The books follow a successful formula: table of contents, acknowledgments, dedication, chronology, chapter notes, further reading, bibliography, honors and awards, and index. R. C. Gorman: Navajo Artist, (0-89490-638-0) and Guadalupe Quintana: Leader of the Hispanic Community (0-89490-637-2) are also in the series.

Su Hagerty Freelance Writer Issaquah, Washington


Math Wizardry for Kids begins with, “This is your chance to become a math wizard.” In 16 chapters, like Go for Golden Shapes and Patterns, and Crack Number Codes, and Send Secret Messages, Margaret Kenda and Phyllis Williams give creative and fun activities for learning and playing with math. They talk about the math all around us: in nature, art, games, and learning and playing with math. It lists the tools and gives the steps all the way through. It lists the tools that will be needed, which are basic supplies for doing many things. A section for parents and teachers gives ideas of how to encourage kids toward math. The type is blue, with illustrations which are cartoon characters and drawings and diagrams in red ink. The final chapter is entitled, “Throw a Math Party,” and one is ready to after the math all around us: in nature, art, games, and throughout life.

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Kentucky, written to help pay for his children’s college. In the first part of this book, the author retells the story of Isaac’s life. He was born to a black woman and white man, who lived together as if married. His father was fairly successful and treated Isaac and his siblings well, but was not considered socially acceptable because of this lifestyle. At one point in his life he went to New Orleans to sell some goods and never returned. The sheriff came and took Isaac’s family and had them sold as slaves. Isaac later found out that his father had sold them. Isaac never saw his brothers or mother again. Isaac was an intelligent person, and at his own admission, did much better than other slaves; but he was still treated as less than a human being. He didn’t understand why he was treated so harshly. When Union soldiers camped near where he lived, he escaped to their camp, and then to the North, where he joined the Union Army. After the war he went to Canada where he learned to be a skilled stonemason and contractor. He married and raised a family.

The first part of the book, obviously developed from Isaac Johnson’s original work, reads like a well written story. The last part of the book, with information from whatever records the author could find, is more like a non-fiction report. Much information is presented throughout about the way of life of blacks in the South before the Civil War and about Isaac’s life after that time. (It does mention one black woman a master “kept for his own use.”) Isaac Johnson was a very successful man who was responsible for building several significant buildings along the St. Lawrence River.

Most of the sketches are charcoal drawings in a fairly primitive style, which definitely add to the story. In the latter section of the book are several photographs of structures built by Isaac Johnson, and one of his grandson, who was interviewed by the author. The book closes with a list of important dates in Isaac Johnson’s life, a bibliography for further reading, and an index. All in all, this biography tells a good story in an informative way.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Judy Belcher
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


West by Covered Wagon by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent is the account of the modern-day Miller family, who, with a group of their friends, set out every Memorial Day to replicate the wagon ride experienced by many American pioneers in the 1800’s. The author switches back and forth between the present and the past, drawing comparisons, generously quoting statistics. She gives the reader a bird’s-eye view of wagoning. The short chapters deal with the specifics such as the animal power and making camp.

A highlight of the book are the imaginative photographs and drawings added by William Munoz. The map shows the routes commonly used by the pioneers, and adds small illustrations of local animals and places of interest.

For the student studying the migration west, this book may be used as a reference. It also doubles as an interesting leisure read. The occasional difficult word is not always prepared by contextual clue, so this book is not suggested for the older reader with a limited reading vocabulary.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington
PICTURE BOOKS


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Gunfights, saloon brawls, and lynchin’ parties. How can you top Tap Andrews, a Christian and an acting marshall, in a place like Cheyenne? It takes a saddle full of faith and a pony full of patience for Tap to safely get through these adventures in the fourth book of the Code of the West series.

Tap is determined to do what’s right. He desires to see this wild west town become tame, even if few of its citizens have no regard for the law. Anyway, who really is behind all the commotion in their little town? His wife Pepper is getting worried and her fears make her feel worse than she’s already felt! What’s to be done? Even though Tap’s worries are relieved when the city counsel dismisses him, Tap just can’t stop caring and trying to bring justice to Cheyenne.

Bly, a master of western adventure series, takes you back to the wild west in this (and two other) western series. If you like the “John Wayne” type stories with a Christian twist, this one’s for you. Subplots of underhanded deputies and vigilantes further the intrigue. Though at times the story line seems to bunny trail with his undeveloped bits of romance between Tap and Pepper and hard-to-read wild west talk, the book is worthy reading for those who enjoy western novels.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4

Susan Aderley
International Ministries, ACSJ
Colorado Springs, Colorado


When the manuscript of the final chapter of Chance McCall’s fiction book about buried Confederate gold arrives at the publishing house, a string of strange events is set in motion. When the Fed-Ex package disappears, editor Lynda Austin decides to travel to Montana to personally look for the missing manuscript which contains the treasure map.

Lynda flies to Wyoming to meet her cowboy friend Brady Stoner in this second book in Stephen Bly’s Austin Stoner Files, The Final Chapter of Chance McCall. From the beginning, their trail is dogged with mishaps and disasters. Not only do individuals from Lynda’s publishing house continue to pop up, but a former acquaintance of Brady’s is seeking revenge on Brady. Things heat up even more when Lynda hears that McCall has died in a diving “accident” in the Bahamas. As the story draws to a conclusion, all of the characters converge on the Montana lake and the dishonest treasure-seekers are caught and dealt with.

Although the development of the characters is weak and the dialogue rather shallow, the story is packed with action. Through all of their adventures, Brady and Lynda come to the realization that God is at work even in circumstances that seem out of control.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4

Esther Knapp
Librarian, Santiam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon


Young Mohawk boy Ohkwa’ri (Bear) is resting in a hidden cave when he overhears Grabber and his three friends planning an attack on a neighboring Indian nation. Although Ohkwa’ri used to look up to Grabber, he knows the plan is wrong and reports it to the Clans. The Clan Mother and war captain Two Ideas plan a confrontational meeting between Ohkwa’ri and Grabber. The entire people listen. Two Ideas ends the discussion by grabbing one of the plotters by the throat and almost braining him with a war club. “This is what it means to go to war,” he says.

*Children of the Longhouse* (the Mohawk Indians) is an easily read, entertaining, and educational book of 150 pages by Joseph Bruchac. He weaves Indian legend and culture throughout the adventure story. Thankfulness is a main theme. Respect for elders, attention to their wisdom and guidance, love of nature and family are others. The book’s tension peaks when the clan divides into two teams, old men and young men, to play a stickball game. Ohkwa’ri is chosen to play on the old men’s team in place of Thunder Voice who is ill. He knows Grabber and his friends will look for opportunities to attack him, so he and his sister ask for grandmother’s advice. This passing of practical, sometimes light-hearted, wisdom from the older generation to the children is a strong point of the book. It also contains a wealth of fascinating detail; for example the ball used for their lacrosse game was made of deer hair tightly covered with deer skin. Ohkwa’ri scores first, then Grabber ties the game. When Ohkwa’ri thoughtlessly decides to take a short cut to the goal through a dangerous ravine, Grabber lies in wait. But it is Grabber who falls down the cliff, dislocating and cutting his leg. Ohkwa’ri saves him, earning his thanks and respect.

The book’s Afterword gives more detailed information about the Mohawk, including a short description of today’s model community in New York. Its four pages will fascinate adults, and have value for students. Six titles are listed under Suggested Reading, and the book ends with a very helpful glossary and pronounciation guide.

*Children of the Longhouse* is both a good adventure and an entertaining history book. Some Christian librarians may hesitate before including a book that contains Indian folklore and religion in their collection. However, I found this book readable, informative, and inoffensive.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 4

Lynn Harding
Librarian, Snohomish County Christian School
Lynnwood, Washington


*My Wartime Summers* is a coming-of-age story, dealing primarily with Ellen, her thoughts and feelings about World War II, and her Uncle Bob. Bob has grown up in Ellen’s household, keeping her from being an only child completely, and is her father’s younger brother. As each year passes, Ellen’s preoccupation with the war and Uncle Bob’s whereabouts while he serves in the Army continues until his eventual homecoming. By this time, Ellen has learned that war is more than just a game and life’s changes are inevitable, even if painful.

Jane Cutler has formatted this book in a rather unusual way. It has three main divisions, 1943, 1944, and 1945, and she only writes of the summer in New York. Its four pages will fascinate adults, and have value for students. Six titles are listed under Suggested Reading, and the book ends with a very helpful glossary and pronounciation guide.

*Children of the Longhouse* (the Mohawk Indians) is an easily read, entertaining, and educational book of 150 pages by Joseph Bruchac. He weaves Indian legend and culture throughout the adventure story. Thankfulness is a main theme. Respect for elders, attention to their wisdom and guidance, love of nature and family are others. The book’s tension peaks when the clan divides into two teams, old men and young men, to play a stickball game. Ohkwa’ri is chosen to play on the old men’s team in place of Thunder Voice who is ill. He knows Grabber and his friends will look for opportunities to attack him, so he and his sister ask for grandmother’s advice. This passing of practical, sometimes light-hearted, wisdom from the older generation to the children is a strong point of the book. It also contains a wealth of fascinating detail; for example the ball used for their lacrosse game was made of deer hair tightly covered with deer skin. Ohkwa’ri scores first, then Grabber ties the game. When Ohkwa’ri thoughtlessly decides to take a short cut to the goal through a dangerous ravine, Grabber lies in wait. But it is Grabber who falls down the cliff, dislocating and cutting his leg. Ohkwa’ri saves him, earning his thanks and respect.

The book’s Afterword gives more detailed information about the Mohawk, including a short description of today’s model community in New York. Its four pages will fascinate adults, and have value for students. Six titles are listed under Suggested Reading, and the book ends with a very helpful glossary and pronunciation guide.

*Children of the Longhouse* is both a good adventure and an entertaining history book. Some Christian librarians may hesitate before including a book that contains Indian folklore and religion in their collection. However, I found this book readable, informative, and inoffensive.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 4

Lynn Harding
Librarian, Snohomish County Christian School
Lynnwood, Washington


*My Wartime Summers* is a coming-of-age story, dealing primarily with Ellen, her thoughts and feelings about World War II, and her Uncle Bob. Bob has grown up in Ellen’s household, keeping her from being an only child completely, and is her father’s younger brother. As each year passes, Ellen’s preoccupation with the war and Uncle Bob’s whereabouts while he serves in the Army continues until his eventual homecoming. By this time, Ellen has learned that war is more than just a game and life’s changes are inevitable, even if painful.

Jane Cutler has formatted this book in a rather unusual way. It has three main divisions, 1943, 1944, and 1945, and she only writes of the summers taking place during wartime. The story is told in the first person and Ellen’s character...

Helsingor, Denmark, during World War II is the setting for this exciting, informative, and well written novel, A Way Through the Sea. Robert Elmer has woven a fascinating tale of eleven-year-old Peter Andersen and his twin sister Elise’s escapades during these dangerous years in Europe.

From the opening of the novel, the reader experiences life through Peter Andersen’s point of view. And while he and his family personally have nothing to fear from the German occupation, they are concerned about their Jewish friend, Henrik, and his family. The action of the story quickly picks up as the Nazis walk the streets, patrol the harbors, and fly overhead without ceasing. Then, their worst nightmare begins. The Andersen’s find out that the Nazis will round up all the Jews in Denmark and send them to the prison camps in Germany. What can they do to help? It doesn’t take them long to realize that they must help get as many Jews to Sweden as possible, the only place of refuge left for their many Jewish friends. The vehicle for this great escape? None other than Uncle Morgan, Mr. Andersen’s brother and a sea captain, who willingly places his own life in danger and provides a way through the sea for the Danish Jews.

This story is based on actual events that happened in Denmark in 1943 and, although the characters are fictional, it definitely has a realistic flavor. This novel would be an asset to any school library and would be an excellent vehicle to enrich a study of World War II and the plight of the Jews in Europe.

The characters learn about the suffering of various prisoners and also have first hand exposure to German methods of interrogation. Even though the incredible evil and violence of the war are definitely part of the story, death and destruction are not glamorized. The story has lots of valid and interesting information about the operation of the Underground and German occupation and prison life.

The premise of the story, that two eleven- or twelve-year-old kids could be thrown into prison as an example to others, may not be totally realistic, but certainly would draw the young reader into the action of the story. The only illustration is on the cover; there is a simple map preceding the text. The simple faith portrayed in the life of the believers is definitely inspiring.


Treasure at the bottom of the sea! What could be more attractive for twelve-year-old twins Peter and Elise and their friend Henrik? World War II is just over and rumors of stolen treasure being hidden by Germans piques the interest of the three detectives. They begin to follow the clues and get a little too close to some suspicious characters. One afternoon, while searching for the answers to their questions they get trapped under a tarp. The small ship takes off and they are taken captive on the last German U-boat left after the war. On their way to South America in the cramped and dirty submarine, with no one at home in Denmark with any details as to their whereabouts, fear takes over. They all begin to wish they had listened to Grandfather’s prayers and talk about God.

On the sub, the children have to live by their wits in order to survive. They begin to help the cook in the galley and as they help with food preparation, they gather the details of the treasure the sub is carrying. The crew has one goal—to get to South America alive and divide up the treasure. They discover they are being followed by another ship. Will the hurricane...
Rejoice for answering God’s call. The use of names seems to be a prevalent part of this work, with some being more creative than others. Naming the moons Big Potato, Small Potato, and Smaller Potato seems a little weak, but naming the asteroids things like Opportunity, Deceit, Anger, Boredom, and so on makes one think. It did not quite fit for a community to be developing and learning many kinds of science, but having an aversion to astronomy, except that the leader interpreted their future by his own experience, “Astronomy is not practical.” Some pilgrim themes were used and the storyline has a strong permeating sense of God’s call and his protection.

The only illustration is on the cover. It shows Rejoice gazing upward with two hexacabrs looking on. This is an intriguing, science fiction story of some families who escape from earth and travel to a far planet they name New Earth. They develop a colony there and work at developing farmland to grow their crops. Everyone is needed to do the work, including twelve-year-old Rejoice and her rebellious teen-age brother, Stronghold. Their mother and father and brain-damaged baby brother play important parts in the story, also. Rejoice is absolutely fascinated by the stars and has a rebellious teen-age brother, Stronghold. Their mother and father and brain-damaged baby brother play important parts in the story, also. Rejoice is absolutely fascinated by the stars and wants to pursue research in the sky that is on track to destroy New Earth.

Robert Elmer has created a wonderful series for students in grades four and up. The word pictures are very vivid. Each chapter is short and filled with riveting adventure. This title is the fifth in the “The Young Underground Series” which was “inspired by stories from Robert’s Denmark-born parents, as well as friends who lived through the years of German occupation.” A creative parent or teacher could use this title as the starting point to lead students from fiction to biographies of Christians who lived through the war years.


Shatterworld, by Lelia Rose Foreman, is an intriguing, science fiction story of some families who escape from earth and travel to a far planet they name New Earth. They develop a colony there and work at developing farmland to grow their crops. Everyone is needed to do the work, including twelve-year-old Rejoice and her rebellious teen-age brother, Stronghold. Their mother and father and brain-damaged baby brother play important parts in the story, also. Rejoice is absolutely fascinated by the stars and moons of this place, and wants to pursue research of them, but she is needed to do her part for the farm. She gets caught in a storm on the ocean and discovers the hexacabrs, large bright blue creatures with six jointed crab legs and tentacles and three eyes. As the people and creatures get to know each other, Rejoice discovers an asteroid in the sky that is on track to destroy New Earth. She prays for a solution to the problem, along with the other families, and God gives her the answer. The book ends with some leaving to work on the asteroid, and the elder thanking Rejoice for answering God’s call.

This story is packed with adventure. The characters are well developed and easy to relate to. Even though the situation is a bit unbelievable, it is good fantasy. The characters work through situations and use their brains to get out of difficult situations. The story line and number of characters sometimes gets a bit complicated and maybe a bit hard to follow. Also, the children are from Denmark and speak Danish and the Germans obviously speak German. Elise is in charge of translation but because the whole story is written in English, the situation gets a bit complicated. However, the reader with a good imagination and the ability to sort through the details, will enjoy this exciting mystery.


The Promised Land, Isabelle Holland’s sequel to The Journey Home, is set on the prairies of Kansas where orphans Maggie and Annie Lavin have lived for the past three years. Maggie, fifteen, and Annie, ten, have found a loving and secure home with James and Priscilla Russell who adopted them from the orphan train after their mother died in New York City. The girls love Uncle James and Aunt Priscilla, but deep inside they both have a sense of not fitting into prairie life. After all, not only are they from a rough and tumble Irish neighborhood in New York, but they have also been brought up in the Catholic religion when everyone else out West is Protestant. In spite of these inner struggles, life goes on happily for the girls until one day when their mother’s brother, Uncle Michael, steps back into their lives. He is determined to bring them back to New York City where they can be raised in the true religion of their Irish heritage.

Holland paints a vivid picture of the emotional, spiritual, and even physical struggles that take place in the adults as well as the children as Maggie and Annie’s future is decided. And, as much as the girls love Uncle James and Aunt Priscilla, the seed of doubt about whether or not they belong in the prairie persists, causing the reader to wonder how the story will be resolved.
This Scholastic hardcover book is a joy to read and the conflicts the girls experience are genuine and understandable. While Holland highlights the major differences between the Protestant and Catholic faiths during discussions between the Russells and Uncle Michael, no bias is detectable.

Annie’s admission that she still prays to the Blessed Virgin, while completely congruous in the context of the story and her struggle, may be troubling to some.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 4

Karen Orfitelli
Freelance Writer, Teacher
Manchester, Connecticut


Several Indian tribes joined together—with a love for Jesus Christ as their common bond. When political unrest caused them to leave their beloved village in Pennsylvania, known as Tents-of-Peace, to set up a new village in Ohio, young Joseph Shabosh and his father traveled in the group. His friend, David Heckstein, a boy who was injured as a young child and unable to walk, was also in the procession. David was carried on a special basket made by his mother, Anna Heckstein, and sometimes carried by some of the strong young men. Also traveling with the group was David Zeisberger, a Moravian missionary, the spiritual leader and pastor of the two hundred Indians.

The Warrior’s Challenge shows how Joseph had to choose between the Christian way of living and loyalty to his father and friend David, or the “old ways” which sound attractive when described by Opeechee, a Mohegan warrior who continued to show up in Joseph’s life. After growing weaker, David dies. His life touched Joseph’s and caused him to make stronger positive choices.

Dave and Neta Jackson follow the lives of David and Joseph. Prior to the story and in the epilogue, they explain that the story is based on the life of the real David Zeisberger. They tell what became of the group after the story.

The illustrations by the authors’ daughter are simple yet attractive. This would be a good story for children to read to themselves. The discussions between David and Joseph especially, deal with problems applicable in most young people’s lives. Even when mistakes are made, by Joseph and then his father, forgiveness and then a solution is possible.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 4

Anita Uiley
Faith Christian School
Mead, Washington


Natalie Ainsworth, at sixteen, is just old enough to begin dating. Her parents have raised her carefully in the ways of the Lord, and her church and youth group have provided a secure foundation and protective boundaries; but even with the best teaching and role models, adolescence is a time of confusion, temptation and mixed emotions.

Tornado Alley, by Yvonne Lehman, centers around Natalie and her family. They live in America’s heartland. Early in the book, her church youth group launches into a new program called the White Dove Club where students commit themselves to abstinence until marriage, and a life of purity and availability to God.

Then Natalie meets Scott Lambert. Scott is consider to be the great catch of all the girls in her junior class. Can she maintain her commitment to purity and godliness and still pursue her growing friendship with the handsome young man? When a tornado rips through her home town, both youngsters discover strengths within themselves that go far beyond the obvious surface attraction.

The White Dove series of romance books for teenagers promises to offer more than just the popular “boy meets girl” theme. There is depth and good Christian value, also. This first book not only deals with the unpredictable and confusing emotional highs and lows of puberty, but also the issues of abstinence, commitment, and purity. Strong Christian values set in a safe and enjoyable format of teenage romance and friendship will make this series very popular with teenagers, especially girls.

Natalie Ainsworth and Scott Lambert are back in Yvonne Lehman’s Secret Storm, the second of the White Dove Romance books. This time, Natalie has been invited to spend the weekend with Scott and his family at their home away from home at posh Lake Oakwood. It seems like the answer to any girl’s dream, but Natalie is concerned about the way Scott is so allusive about discussing his family, particularly his mother. What she doesn’t know, and what Scott fears telling her, is that his mother is an alcoholic.

One other thing that makes the weekend uncomfortable is the presence at the lake of Katlyn Chander. Arrogant, rude, and somewhat vindictive, she boasts often that she was Scott’s previous girlfriend. When Katlyn’s older sister, Jennifer, invites everyone to their place for a cookout, what seems like an innocent outing turns dangerous. Scott and Natalie both need to fall back on their White Dove commitment to purity and obedience to Christ in all things. Too much drinking, particularly by Scott’s older brother, Zac, leads the kids into tragic circumstances.

Secret Storm, like the first book in the White Dove series, Tornado Alley, deals well with very real issues that teenagers face. The focus in this book is alcohol, not only how it affects young people directly when they make right and wrong choices concerning it, but also how it affects families when one or more members is over indulgent. Scott has to make decisions both concerning whether he will drink and whether he will accept and forgive his mother who is alcoholic.

Once again, this book is strong in good Christian values as it walks the two teens through a slippery and dangerous path of choices, wrong versus right. Tragic and very real consequences unfold all around them as they seek righteousness amidst friends and relatives who fall short. Their example in the end does much to help and encourage those around them.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Gayle Chessman Haberman
Teacher, West Hills Christian School
Portland, Oregon


Merry Hanson has a secret. One that’s not going to stay secret very long. Merry’s secret is she’s found a baby. Author Beverly Lewis has added a charming story to her SummerHill Secrets series. When Charity is abandoned on Merry’s doorstep, Merry and her family to adopt Charity. She must also convince her Pennsylvania Amish friend, Rachel, to purity and godliness and still pursue her growing friendship with the handsome young man? When a tornado rips through her home town, both youngsters discover strengths within themselves that go far beyond the obvious surface attraction.

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u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Gayle Chessman Haberman
Teacher, West Hills Christian School
Portland, Oregon
A Cry in the Dark teaches a lot of lessons about love. There’s love for the helpless infant and a surprising love for a snoopy old neighbor lady. There’s the discovery of a best friend’s love and worry over a boy friend’s love. Love for God ties it all together. The story has an interesting combination of old Amish traditions and the modern problem of abandoned babies. The solution, although predictable, is a satisfying ending. The stories in the SummerHill Secrets series are complete in each book.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Mystlemay Pittman Crane
Freelance Writer, Editor
Alderwood Manor, Washington

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Sensitivity and a realistic portrayal of young people’s feelings are the hallmarks of Carolyn Meyer’s newest book, Gideon’s People. Set in the early 1910’s, the novel focuses on the cross-cultural experiences that arise when the wagon of a twelve-year-old Jewish boy, Isaac Litvak, overturns and he is forced to recuperate in the home of a kind Amish family.

At first, the differences between the two ethnic groups make it difficult for Isaac to relate to his Amish hosts. Simple things like diet and language, taken for granted by both the Jewish and Amish families, become stumbling blocks to understanding. But gradually, as Isaac’s stay stretches into two weeks, he gains insight into the inner workings of the Amish family. He soon realizes that something is wrong. Sixteen-year-old Gideon has doubts about many of the Amish customs, and his younger sister Annie is worried about what he’ll do. Isaac gets drawn into Annie’s concern, and soon learns that he has more in common with the Amish than he thought.

Carolyn Meyer is an excellent writer, her prose smooth, flowing, and believable. The characters are deftly drawn, involving the reader utterly in the lives of Isaac, Annie, and Gideon. The time period is cohesive and necessary explanations flow naturally within the text. Gideon’s People is an excellent portrayal of a young person’s struggle with religious tradition and the desire to find his own way in the world.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Georgia Beaverson
Freelance Writer
Madison, Wisconsin

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Travis McLarren is an angry young man. Why did God let his parents die in the small but vicious tornado in Merlama Gap, a small farm town at the base of the Smokey Mountains? And why must he and his sisters be forced to leave their ranch to live with their mean-spirited, double-dealing uncle? And most of all, why does his sister Laurie seem to have such peace and confidence that the Lord will “work all things together for good,” in spite of all the trials they face?

Fifteen-year-old Travis struggles with these issues in Julie Nye’s book In My Uncle’s House. He desperately wants to stay on his family’s ranch and keep raising cattle and working the land, but since his Uncle Shelver has custody of Travis and his sisters, they are forced to sell the ranch to pay off the mortgage debts. Travis leaves behind all that is dear to him, including his mare, Winsome. He and his sisters face a new life at Chellavue, the old manor house of a cotton plantation. Here life is vastly different from what they are used to—a house the size of a small hotel, formal meals served every evening, a life of luxury instead of the hard physical work required on the ranch, and new schoolmates to adjust to at Sweetoak Academy.

Chellavue is home to several prize-winning horses, shown and jumped by Travis’ Aunt Shelver. Homesick for his ranch, Travis, spends his spare time helping the stableman with the horses. Travis falls in love with a powerful chestnut horse, Flame, but is forbidden to ride him, since the horse is Aunt Shelver’s. Travis’ sisters adjust well to their new surroundings, but Travis chafes at the change, has difficulty making friends at school, and holds Uncle Shelver personally responsible for his miserable life at Chellavue.

When Travis overhears a conversation between his Uncle Shelver and a lawyer, it confirms what Travis suspected all along—that his uncle is using the profit from the sale of the ranch for his own benefit. Travis’ family had already been estranged from the Shelvers for years because of their opposition to his mother and father’s Christian faith. Uncle Shelver’s underhanded dealings only give Travis one more reason to despise him, to speak rudely to him, and to fight him at every turn. When Travis tells Laurie of Uncle Shelver’s plans, she takes it in stride and insists that since there is nothing they can do about the situation, they must simply trust the Lord to work things out for them. She encourages Travis to pray about it, but he is too angry. Having been raised in a Christian home, Travis knows that his father would never approve of his poor attitude, but Travis is past caring.

Angry at God, bitter toward his uncle, and unhappy living at Chellavue, Travis quits going to church. The one time he does agree to attend, God speaks to Travis’ heart and convicts him of his wrong attitude and behavior. However, his heart is so embittered that he rejects God’s call. He takes his frustration out on a late-night ride with the forbidden horse Flame, who stumbles in the dark and injures his leg only days before Aunt Shelver is to take Flame to a horse show.

At his wits end, Uncle Shelver decides to send Travis away to a military academy. Finding little sympathy for his bad attitude and behavior from his sister Laurie, Travis seeks refuge in a quiet place, and finds himself at the church. The pastor discovers him there, and through his gentle guidance, Travis realizes he has never really committed his life to the Lord. When he turns his anger and bitterness over to God, he feels a load has been lifted from him. He returns to apologize to his aunt and uncle, who are surprisingly receptive to his change of attitude, and the healing of their relationship begins. In fact, the Shelvers are so impressed by the change in Travis, they agree to go to church with him, just to find out more about who God really is.

Readers will relate with Travis’ spiritual struggles as he tries to make sense of some very difficult issues in his life. In My Uncle’s House will especially appeal to non-Christians who are interested in the things of the Lord, and to those raised in Christian homes who struggle with the reality of their faith. Nye’s book emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with the Lord, and the necessity of trusting God completely, even when things don’t seem to make sense. The story is interspersed with the full-page black and white illustrations of Stephanie True, which younger readers will appreciate.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Sherri Beeler
Teacher, Cascade Christian High School
Medford, Oregon

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Peart, Jane. Homeward the Seeking Heart. ISBN 0800753747. (Orphan Train West; 1).


Homeward the Seeking Heart is the first of Peart’s Orphan Train Trilogy. In this novel, she skillfully weaves facts around the tale of orphan,
Zephronia Victortine Todd, who is abandoned by her actress mother at Greystone Orphanage near Boston, Massachusetts.

Todd is only five years old when her mother abandons her to seek acting work in Europe. Her father, John Todd, isn’t part of her life. He hasn’t been seen or heard from since shortly after Todd was born. When Todd arrives at the orphanage, she quickly becomes popular with the caretakers as well as the other orphans at Greystone. Blessed with an outgoing personality and quick wit, she soon becomes her first real friend, a young and serious girl, Kit Ternan. Even though Kit and Todd are completely opposite in nature, they make a vow to stay friends no matter what happens in their lives.

Kit and Todd, along with a third friend, Laurel Vestal, soon board the Orphan Train together and head West in search of families willing to adopt them. Todd is adopted by Octavia Hale, a rich widow who is looking for a live-in companion for her granddaughter, Helene.

The plot twists and turns in this captivating novel of Todd’s life. Teens and adults alike will love this heartwarming adventure with nonstop action.

**Quest for Lasting Love**

Jane Peart strikes the hearts of readers in Quest for Lasting Love, the second of the Orphan Train West series. In this engrossing novel, readers follow the life of young Laurel Vestal. Laurel is brought to Greystone Orphanage by her gravely ill mother who can no longer care for her. Her father, whom she doesn’t even remember, was killed years earlier in a tragic accident when he was knocked down by a team of runaway horses.

During her first weeks at the orphanage, Laurel anticipates the return of her mother, who promised to come back for her as soon as she recovered from her illness. Within the first few pages of the book, however, Laurel receives word that her mother has died in the sanatorium, leaving her at the mercy of the overcrowded and bleak institution.

Laurel’s story continues as she and two other orphaned friends, Todd and Kit, board the Orphan Train and head West in search of families willing to adopt them. The three young ladies promise to remain friends forever, even though they are separated by their adoptions. Laurel is adopted by Doctor and Mrs. Woodward, still grieving parents who lost their only daughter two years before Laurel arrives.

This historical romance is captivating reading, and the plot moves quickly though Laurel’s life, her quest to find her true identity, and her marriage. Though it is the second in the Orphan Train series, Peart does not leave readers with a sense of having missed relevant details from the first book.

Readers of all ages will love Laurel and be spellbound by the difficulties this young woman endures. This novel is a quick read for adults, a terrific story for teens, and would be an excellent read aloud in a classroom.

**The Heart's Lonely Secret**

Jane Peart’s The Heart’s Lonely Secret is another volume in her Orphan Train West series. This story focuses on orphan Ivy Austin who lives in the dismal and overcrowded Greystone Orphanage outside Boston, Massachusetts. Ivy’s parents die and, at the tender age of five, she has been thrust from the warm and loving atmosphere of her home into the institutionalized world of an orphanage. Readers follow Ivy’s harrowing and short-lived adoption by a circus family who is determined to train her to be an equestrian performer. Since this family considers her nothing more than an addition to their circus act, once she’s injured in a stunt, the Tarantinos abandon her while she is still recovering in St. Luke’s Hospital. During the days of Ivy’s recovery, hospital officials begin making plans to send her back to the orphanage. Nurse Halloran, however, intervenes on her behalf, and finds a place for her aboard the Orphan Train, Ivy’s only hope of escaping the dismal existence in the orphanage. Once aboard the Train, Ivy finds her first real friend, Allison. The two become friends for not only their journey West, but also for the rest of their lives.

Peart spins another captivating tale in a historical setting. The plot moves quickly and although the ending is predictable, it’s a book readers won’t be able to put down.

**u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5**

Karen Orfijelli
Freelance Writer/Teacher, Cornerstone Christian School
Manchester, Connecticut


The time is 1885; the place, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Captain Lashbrooke, commander of the G Company of the Winnipeg Rifles, is in need of a company bugler, and Tom Kerslake, a boy of thirteen, has decided that he is the right man for the job. Much to his surprise, Captain Lashbrooke agrees.

As Tom embarks on a military career, Luc Goyette is attending Sunday Mass with his family in the Metis community of Batoche, Saskatchewan. The calm of the service is shattered by Louis Riel, who is outraged over the priest’s blatant pro-government preaching. Riel, who sees himself as a prophet to the Metis nation, soon becomes a rallying point for the disillusioned among his people.

Soldier Boys, a novel written by David Richards, is both well-researched history and a riveting story. The writing style is clean and uncluttered, and the author excels at showing, rather than telling. The plot unfolds smoothly. It is the element of characterization, however, that is central. Richards introduces his reader to a large but likable cast of characters, ranging from the wholly imaginary to the historically significant. Through the two main characters, Tom and Luc, Richards explores the richness of the Metis and pioneer cultures of the time. Canada as a nation is still taking shape, and these two young men, with their dreams of the glories of war, are quickly caught up in the events that future generations will remember as the Riel Rebellion.

The storylines of these two characters are developed independently until the author brings them together in a climactic moment: “He aimed, bullets cracked through the air around him and smacked into the logs. The horn shrieked and Pierre called out for him to run. He didn’t care. He felt no fear, only cold hate. He would get the trumpet. Even as he pulled the trigger, a thought flashed through his mind: ‘The horn blows are boys, like me!’”

Although the battle scenes are realistically depicted, the author does not glorify violence, nor does he dwell on it. He is more interested in the moral and ethical battles that take place in the minds and hearts of his central characters as they struggle to define themselves and their world.

The book includes two maps of the battlefield, a glossary of French and Cree expressions used by the various characters, and an epilogue which summarizes the factual events upon which the novel is based.

There is one occasion during the battle where Luc’s Cree comrade yells, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph!” But later, Luc ponders the fact that in the heat of battle, his non-Christian friend calls on Jesus. In this way, the one potentially problematic incident in the entire novel becomes food for thought. It is also completely in keeping with both the character and the events.

**u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5**

Sylvia Stopforth
Librarian, Trinity Western University
Langley, British Columbia, Canada


DJ, short for Darla Jean, sets out to execute a plan to prevent a major change in her life. Robert, her mother’s boyfriend, has proposed marriage. DJ and her mom have gotten along just fine by themselves and their lives will become chaotic if her mother accepts, because along with Robert come his young twin sons, the Double B’s.

To make matters in her life worse, DJ hears trouble brewing at the Briones Riding Academy where she stables her horse and works after school. Tony, a sullen teenage boy, has been hurling racial slurs at her black friend Hilary. If
Helen Hunter
Author/Freelance Writer
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Gr. 6 - 9.

Why Papa Went Away and Other Stories is a collection of stories about the Mennonite Brethren people, their faith, and their heritage. The first story is set in Russia in the mid-1800’s and tells the life of Abraham Schellenberg, a leader in the Mennonite Brethren Church. It tells of his decision to accept Jesus as savior and join the church in spite of possible persecution, and how he was used by the Lord, first in Russia and then in the United States. Why Papa Went Away is told from the son’s point of view, and though he embraced his father’s faith and grew to appreciate all that his father had done for the church, it clearly shows how Johann Claassen, the founder of the Mennonite Brethren Church, sacrificed his family for the cause of the church.

“Over Land and Sea to Freedom” is a story about the Jacob Wiebe family and many other families who moved from Russia to Hillsboro, Kansas in 1874 to find religious freedom. It is a well-written story showing the move through the eyes of their daughter, Katherina.

“The Man Who Stopped Fights” is a story about Peter Friesen, an educated Russian man who served as a mediator between the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches, as well as representing these churches before the Russian government.

The last story, “A Gift of Flour,” tells of Abraham Unruh, centering around a time in his life when the Mennonite Central Committee brought flour to the hungry people of Russia in the 1920’s.

Each story includes lacklustre sketches and ends with brief biographical notes. Why Papa Went Away and other stories tells the stories of five Mennonite Brethren Church leaders, but is frustratingly uninspiring.


Hue & Cry is a sequel to Elizabeth Yates earlier work, The Journeymen, and it is a continuation of the story of the Austin family. She has authored sixteen other novels, as well as fifteen non-fiction works. Her best known work is Amos Fortune, Free Man, which won her a Newbery Medal.

One doesn’t hear and the other doesn’t speak. Together they make a wonderful story. A story children and adults will both love as they come to understand others who may be different from themselves. Heart warming and informative, Sound Friendships chronicles the life of Willa who lost her hearing at age fourteen. Then at age twenty-four she learns about NEADS (New England Assistance Dog Service). From that moment her life is changed. The story is also Honey’s. Honey is a Hearing Dog. Her devotion, faithfulness, and intelligence turn shy, lonely Willa into a confident spokesperson for Service Dogs.

Learn what it takes to train a Hearing Dog. Follow Honey’s progress as she learns the necessary skills, like letting Willa know when someone’s knocking or the tea kettle is boiling.
This Golden Retriever will steal your heart. A good story for parents and young children to read together.

Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
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Set in a tiny Virginia town in the 1970’s, *I Read It in the Wordless Book* tells the coming-of-age story of Carrie Grietkirk. Carrie’s mother is dead and, as the novel opens, her missionary father returns from Vietnam, where he has spent most of Carrie’s life. Her paternal grandmother, a fiercely pious member of the Dutch First Reformed Church of Dutch Falls, has raised twelve-year-old Carrie.

Her father’s return triggers (or coincides with?) the beginning of teenage rebellion within Carrie. Her father brings with him a new Vietnamese bride, Phuong, so his homecoming is complicated by all the problems of a new step-family and cross-cultural relationships. Carrie begins to pull aside her veil of innocence to see that adult lives—and life in general—are complicated. Religion, sex, unhappiness, sin, doubt, frustration, and addiction all march before Carrie’s newly-opened eyes that summer of her father’s return. *I Read It in the Wordless Book* is more than a coming-of-age novel. It’s also the portrait of a town.

Betty Smartt Carter has written an intelligent, sensitive first novel. The back cover blurb draws a likeness between this novel and Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. While the two are similar in many respects, *Wordless Book* does not have the social resonance of Miss Lee’s novel. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t a worthwhile read; it is.

The number of characters to keep track of might make it difficult for younger readers. References to drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, and some mild swearing shouldn’t interfere with the novel’s worth and insights.

Georgia Beaverson
Freelance Writer
Madison, Wisconsin


Tim Devon’s life is changed forever when he discovers a dark secret from his past. His search for answers takes him to the City of Amsterdam, where his quest is soon buried by danger and death. Friendless, penniless, Tim soon becomes a slave to the drug dealer he pushes for...and to the drugs themselves. His life is taking a downward spiral. Then he meets a single caring person whose unexpected kindness begins to melt Tim’s hardened heart. Rajam Prasad, an evangelist from India, is totally committed to serving God and helping others. With Rajam at his side, Tim overcomes his many obstacles and finally finds true peace...while leaning against a garbage dumpster.

Tim came to Holland seeking his earthly father, but ignoring his heavenly Father. He left Holland having found both...and a special friend whom he would never forget.

Although Tim Devon is an interesting character, John Shepherd’s acting is mediocre: Tim’s personality is never really developed. Amerjit Deu, on the other hand, plays the lovable Rajam Prasad to perfection. Deu fully portrays Rajam’s amazing patience, growing faith, and eagerness to share the Gospel. Without Rajam Prasad—and, very likely, Amerjit Deu’s expert acting—Caught just wouldn’t work.

After an exciting introduction, the pace is rather slow until Rajam comes on the scene.

James F. Collier has directed a touching movie that explores the darkness of human spirit and the glorious light of God’s love. The beautiful theme song, “Let Your Love Lift Me Up Again,” is an excellent finishing touch. Although Caught contains some graphic drug use, PG-13 is probably too strong a rating.

Tara A. Sigler
Freelance Writer
Walker, Iowa


Michael, the Archangel, is absolutely beside himself with concern as he watches events that are taking place on earth. He can hardly restrain himself from going through the door of his heavenly realm to that of earth in an all out effort to stop things. His Master, whom he has known and served from the beginning, is apparently about to be hurt—not just hurt, but crucified—by a sinful man; and Michael does not understand why. Rathel, Gabriel, and Recorder, other high ranking angels of the Most High’s host are extremely worried about what Michael might do. All of heaven is waiting for his direction, but the Master, Jesus, has not, for reasons they can not comprehend, summoned them. They can only wait and watch.

Then Recorder takes Michael to a place where they are allowed a brief viewing of the whole panorama of history, or time as we know it. From the beginning even before God created the heavens and the earth, to the end when he calls his chosen ones home and makes all things new, they see that God was not alone. The Master, Jesus, was there in the beginning, and he was there in the end. And somehow, for some unknown reason, the cross had to take place to make all things complete. It is enough to give Michael the peace he needs to wait and see how things transpire.

The Triumph, by Gene Edwards, is an amazing story of insight into the crucifixion through the eyes of the angels who had loved and served Jesus from the beginning and did not comprehend why he had to die on Golgotha. It is a book alive with emotion that keeps you transfixed and poised waiting with the heavenly host. One moment I found myself, with Michael and Gabriel, crying, “No! No! Don’t allow this thing to happen!” And the next I wanted to reassure the angels from my 20th Century vantage point, “It’s okay! It’s okay!” Never has the crucifixion been brought to such light or revelation for me as through the pages of this book, the fourth in a series of books called The Chronicles of the Door. I want to go back and read The Beginning, The Escape, and The Birth, and view these events, too, through heaven’s eyes. I was moved by the drama on earth as it was revealed through vision that had seen all things and yet was veiled from all of the why’s and how’s, even as our vision is veiled. The panoramic picture of all history was especially encouraging and exciting.

The Triumph is a book that is deep and written in almost poetic style in places. Its language is simple and direct, but much of its material is very thought provoking, even difficult to totally grasp. It is a book that a person could read over and over to capture deeper levels of meaning and understanding. Obviously speculative in nature, still it is accurate in its account of the things of heaven from a biblical perspective. The liberties it takes into the lives and thoughts of angels are not out of line.

*Old Familiar Places,* Robert Funderburk’s forth book in *The Innocent Years,* is set in the time of the rise of Elvis Presley’s fame. The heroine of the book, Jessie Temple, quits college to follow the dream of a singing career. She moves to Memphis in search of stardom, only to end up as a waitress in an insignificant eating joint. Her path crosses that of Billy Pilgrim, a street preacher, and she accompanies him in his rise to popularity as an evangelist.

Uncertain what she truly is seeking, Jessie ignores the pleas of her hometown boyfriend to return home, and continues to travel with Billy, unsure of her growing feelings for him. Her world comes crashing to a halt when she is told of Billy’s death in a one-car accident.

This well-written story of Southern life in the fifties captures the nostalgia of life at that time and continues to ask the old questions on the purpose of life. It appeals to a wide audience as the lives of Jessie’s younger brother and sister are intertwined throughout the story and their facing issues such as dealing with terminal illness and making choices to go against the values of a moral, Christian family in the conservative South.

Esther Knaupp
Librarian, Suntam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon


Based on the few historical facts available about Pontius Pilate and historical records about his contemporaries, this novel covers Pilate’s rise from soldier to Prefect of Palestine to his retirement. At the heart of the novel is Pilate’s decision to sentence Jesus of Nazareth to be crucified at the request of the Sanhedrin. Pilate has often been presented as a villain, but this portrayal provides a different view by showing how Pilate came to be in Palestine, his previous interactions with the Jewish leadership, and the pressure he may have faced from Rome. Paul L. Maier presents believable characters and guides the reader through the complicated web of Roman politics. Some readers may find occasional anachronisms, such as references to genetics or male pattern baldness, distracting. I recommend this novel, but advise readers to keep in mind that this is largely fictionalized. A historical note and bibliographical references of historical sources are provided.

Karen Orsfield
Freelance Writer/Teacher, Cornerstone Christian School
Manchester, Connecticut


Writer/historian Ethel Herr spins a tale well worth reading in the first book of her new series, *The Seekers.* Sixteenth-century Netherlands is the setting of this saga where two young people, Pieter-Lucas van den Garde and Aletta Engelshofen, fall in love and then must deal with a host of problems that are thrust into their lives.

Using the Renaissance and the Reformation as a backdrop for this story, Herr skillfully weaves fascinating historical details of the political and religious climates during this time with the fictional struggles of Pieter-Lucas and Aletta. Pieter, an artist and son a Calvinist, grapples with bitterness when an extreme Calvinist sect, the Beggars, mistakenly imprisons him. Meanwhile, Aletta has secretly promised her love to him and vows to wait for him. The tension grows as these two young people are torn apart by the discord of their parents.

Herr’s extensive historical knowledge and accomplished skill as a writer merge to make this novel entertaining, educational and among the best Christian novels on the market. It contains a fascinating and believable plot, characters who are developed in depth, and a setting that is intriguingly unfamiliar. Once readers have finished this book, they will eagerly anticipate the next in the series.

Karen Orsfield
Freelance Writer/Teacher, Cornerstone Christian School
Manchester, Connecticut


*The Shepherds Castle,* originally published as Donal Grant in 1883 is the sequel to *The Baronet’s Song,* also by George MacDonald. Michael Phillips has edited the original to a format more suitable for todays readers; even so some passages may take several reads in order to glean the full import or intent from it. George MacDonald is considered a master storyteller whom many more famous writers than he acclaim as inspiration early in their literary efforts. A young minister on the edge of religious society because of his strong anticalvinist views, MacDonald used his writings as a way to present a more loving and compassionate God.

Donal Grant is a young scholar and former sheep herder who is heading into the world, not to make his fortune, but to find work of purpose, and perhaps a supply of books to read. Written as a mystery, it is a gothic dark tale of extreme evil if we were to consider it a reality. A desperately wicked man is given a light characterization, leaving us to wonder how he came to do the things he did. Because MacDonald is using his writing as a tool he often speaks through his alter ego Donal (macDONALd) in such deep spiritual outbursts, that you aren’t exactly sure what his full meaning is, or how to interpret his theology. MacDonald’s very complex castle and using the diagram at the beginning of the book may help to sort things out somewhat, then again maybe not. The floor plan does serve to give away some of the plot and mystery. For example when they are looking for a secret room we already know there is one and an idea of what they will find there.

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The book is interesting to read for the ageless theme, the love and forgiveness of God. MacDonald puts his very heart into his books striving to introduce God to just one more reader.

Karla J. Kessell
Academic Librarian, Mount Vernon Nazarene College
Mount Vernon, Ohio
of inconvenient, dangerous, and often innocent relatives and friends, and the sensual lust and perversed excess of many of the people, even though handled as carefully as possible, were still difficult to read. Nero was a horrible man, and everything around him was stained by his incredible sin. In addressing the issue of the lurid nature of his work, Paul Maier commented in his preface that because some scenes were so crucial to the story of the first church, it would be dishonest to omit them.

This book is more than just an historical fiction work. It is what Mr. Maier describes as a “documentary novel.” It is as accurate as a book can possibly be dealing with a period of history where we have little concrete written corroboration. Mr. Maier researched and documented his work thoroughly with twenty five pages of footnotes. He used three ground rules in writing the book that I found really added to the intrigue of the story. All people mentioned in the book were accurate and called by their true names if possible. No personality or event contradicts known historical fact. And, finally, in those areas where the author had to “construct” his own story, it was done so according to probability and was footnoted carefully. It was fascinating to read the story and then flip to the notes and realize just how accurate and on track it was. I felt like I really met Paul and Peter, Aquilla and Priscilla, and even Nero. In a way, it was like traveling in time and viewing the birth of the Christian Church.

Though carefully written and accurately documented, this book is not for everyone. It definitely requires a mature audience. Sex and violence were a very real part of First Century Rome, and though handled well, they could not be avoided altogether. As the author himself put it, that would be dishonest.


Reena O’Donnell, a striking darkhaired beauty, chooses to leave her social position and wealth in Chicago, to answer the call of God to be a missionary on the Canadian frontier. A vivid dream, coupled with the potent message from Reverend D. L. Moody, work together to confirm in Reena’s heart what she must do. Though filled with a mixture of excitement and trepidation, she sets off with her uncle to share her faith with the Assiniboine Indian tribe.

In the midst of this wilderness, another call is being made on a young farmer, Hunter Stone. His once peaceful lifestyle has been drastically changed by the kidnapping and death of his beloved wife, Betsy, by a renegade Crow Indian, Red Wolf. Being consumed with hatred, Hunter vows to track him down and kill him for revenge. But the attempt is thwarted by the cunning Indian and Hunter is almost killed. Reena finds Hunter seriously wounded and dying. Her gentle care helps nurse him back to health, but will this all-consuming hate destroy him after all? Hunter finally joins the newly formed Canadian Royal Mounted Police, and seems to be gaining a measure of control when another strike by Red Wolf, this time against Reena, threatens to undo all the good that has been established in Hunter’s life.

Alan Morris makes a solid hit with his first solo novel, By Honor Bound. Having co-authored several books with his well-known writer/father, Gilbert Morris, the younger Morris has the background and experience to weave a suspenseful, touching story that will fill the reader with anticipation.


The once land-hungry Simon Meade, now confined to a wheelchair because of a gunshot wound, was learning what the word ‘humble’ meant. Being used to bossing everyone around and running the show, he now had to rely heavily on others for help. When the biggest need in his life, and most important to him—the recovery of his kidnapped son from the Sioux Indians—comes a possibility, he finds that he is incapable of taking action.

In desperation, Meade finally asks Jim Reno, his once hated neighbor, to help out. His son, Jason Meade, had grown up in the Indian camps, and had learned the Indian ways. When spotted by a fur trader, the young man with the piercing blue eyes had definitely become an integral part of the tribe. Jim knows that to even try to get into the Indian camp would be risky, let alone confront and convince the Meade boy that he needs to leave all he knows and rejoin the hated white man. But a twist of fate, where his entire Indian camp is wiped out by the pony soldiers, gives the young man no option but to start his life fresh as a white man. This outsider with his strange Indian ways must now face harsh prejudice and challenges as he attempts to become a part of the white man’s culture.

Gilbert Morris speaks to the dilemma of changing one’s identity with frankness yet understanding. The characters are full and caring and Morris draws the reader into the challenges presented with skill and sensitivity. Lone Wolf is a notch above the typical western as the storyline can parallel the challenges a new believer must face as they also must set aside the old man and put on the new. This is an interesting and touching story that is a delight to read.


Three Winslow cousins, Ruth, Priscilla, and Esther, meet together in bustling New York City at the turn of the century. Each possesses a unique charm, beauty, and talent, that helps to open doors of opportunity—but not every open door is desirable or proper for a young lady to pursue.

Charmed with the idea of moving away from the Wyoming ranch, Priscilla joins her cousin Ruth in becoming nurses-in-training at Baxter Hospital. Ruth immediately takes to the rigorous routine and finds that working with the sick is very fulfilling as well as helpful in enabling her to gain experience to become a missionary in Africa—her heart’s desire. Dr. David Burns, a most compassionate and caring physician, adds a thread of interest to the job as Ruth pours herself into her work.

But Priscilla hates the hard work at the hospital, being star-struck by the lure of the theater. She finally is able to procure a part in a musical and finds great success—her dream come true. Unfortunately, not all is glister in the world of acting, and Priscilla finds compromise and deception a most difficult role to deal with.

Esther Winslow feels like a worthless ornament in the rich surroundings her father has provided by becoming the vice president of the Union Pacific Railroad. When challenged by her father, she finally chooses to pursue what she has always enjoyed—photography. But she doesn’t just want to take pretty pictures, she desires to capture the emotions and mood of those she photographs. Her boldness and tenacity eventually gain her the title “Iron Lady” as she is able to expose injustices and the devastating plight of the poor immigrants trying to survive in the New York slums.

Gilbert Morris weaves an interesting tale as he enjoins the lives of these three cousins through the intricate web of the socioeconomic system of 1902. The reader will discover interesting and pertinent historical facts as well as enjoy the intriguing lives of this trio of Winslows. The Iron Lady is a clever title, not only portraying Esther Winslow’s ability to break into the mostly man-ruled world of journalism, but it aptly portrays America’s open door policy to the many immigrants that flee to America and gaze gratefully at the Iron Lady, the Statue of Liberty.
as they enter at Ellis Island full of hopes and dreams for a successful future.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


Jim Reno has faced plenty of tough situations. His mining for gold required a lot of danger, hard work and luck, but he and his two partners, Easy Jones and fourteen-year-old Lee Morgan, had managed to stick it out, with no small amount of success.

But now he was being asked a great favor by a dying friend and ex-commander in the army. It was no small task, to care for the family. Major Reynolds would be leaving behind and help them get established out West. The challenge to toughen up refined, citified society people was a difficult task, and yet a greater test still faced them—to reclaim the family ranch in Wyoming from established ranchers that could be ruthless and unforgiving. Ripen graze land was one thing, but convincing the ranchers that their cattle needed to stay off the Sun Ranch’s land, which they had been accustomed to using for years, creates some real enemies.

Young Chris Reynolds, seventeen, takes the responsibility to heart and begins to grow and mature in a way that his easy life in the big city had not required. Ramona, his sister, is a bit more feisty, resenting Reno’s help, yet realizing that the family could never survive without him. But her haughty attitude only promises heartache and confusion. Can Mona change and understand that life out West, as a necessity for survival, must sometimes allow for unrefined methods to solutions?

Cattle rustling, gun fights, and ambushes promise an interesting frontier novel. Gilbert Morris has a good handle on the lingo and tough living conditions that faced the early ranchers as they tried to establish homesteads out west. The salvation message is a bit preachy, confined to a five page dialogue between the family cook, Deacon, and beautiful Belle Montez, a mail order bride with a dubious past. All in all, the storyline is fairly typical with the rich, obsessive rancher threatening the “small guy” with a complete wipeout. Yet Valley Justice is still an entertaining read for the western lover.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 5

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


Using the setting of a National League hockey team and a cutthroat business environment, Broadman & Holman and World Wide Pictures do a stunning job of presenting the age-old message of salvation in a modern setting. When attorney Robbie Steele seeks to recruit Cody Harris, retired hockey star, as her final hope for making a go of the struggling pro team, she does not count on the fact that he has cleaned up his act and become a Christian.

In a world of political moves and dishonest maneuvers, the self-sufficient Robbie finds herself to the end of herself and comes face to face with the importance of honesty and loyalty. She is touched by the message she hears at the Billy Graham Crusade, and begins to see herself as she really is. With the help of Cody, she makes some decisions that will change her life forever.

This sixty-minute video is fast-moving and suspenseful, leaving questions in the viewer’s mind until the end. It gives lots of openings for discussion with teens in today’s world of mixed up morals and standards.


“How long has our wandering son been gone this time?” Greg has always been the rebel of the Stuart family. While his brother Scott studied dutifully at a seminary, Greg prefers slipping away to his island hideaway for months at a time. He finally settles down and gets a job, only to be lured away by empty promises and superficial friends. Greg’s parents, worried and confused, are drifting apart. Scott is constantly frustrated as he struggles to help his wayward brother. Greg’s selfish actions are tearing the Stuart family apart.

But when a crazy get-rich-quick scheme goes awry, Greg is abandoned by his ‘friends’ and his career is shot. For the first time, he realizes how empty his life is. With the realization comes a turning point. Added to this, his father is kidnapped by terrorists in North Africa, a fact that becomes the breaking point. Added to this, Greg begins his own personal relationship with Christ, and the family peace is restored at last.

This very intensely emotional book does an excellent job at realistically portraying the thoughts and feelings of a severely depressed person which give hope to the one going through a similar circumstance and gives understanding to the one trying to help the one in depression.

Riols makes the characters and their circumstances totally believable, and puts in suspense and excitement to keep the reader interested.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Esther Knupp
Librarian, Santiam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon


Having its setting in the explosive land of Israel, Veiled Threats almost reads like the background to a current news story. Author Frank Simon weaves together several plots which all merge as the story comes to a climax.
The action opens with an attempted bombing at the Dome of the Rock which is stopped by Ya’acov Isaacson of the Military Intelligence and his men. The story then moves to an excavation site in Jerusalem that is being done by Moshe Stein of the Hebrew University, Dr. Anne McAdams, and student assistant Mars Enderly. They make a stunning discovery as they unearth a room filled with discarded treasures from the temple, the most exciting of all being the temple veil which had been ripped in half from the top to the bottom.

As the story progresses, the Palestinian Revolutionary Force (PRF) and other Arab groups begin working together in an effort to crush the Jews. The unsuspecting Anne McAdams becomes their pawn as she is kidnapped by the leaders of the PRF. In the meantime, Ann and Mars Enderly’s relationship has gone beyond that of a professor and her student. While Mars frantically seeks to find Anne, she is reading the Bible that had been given to her by a Christian Jew.

This suspense-filled plot includes Mars Enderly’s struggle in his relationship with his father and his developing friendship with Ann. For Ann, the conflict is between the evidence that they are uncovering in their dig and her doubts in the truth of the Bible. This inner conflict is intensified when Ann is abducted by terrorists. Her decision to follow Christ and still marry Mars, an unbeliever, may be a problem to some readers, although this is not the end of the story; the author’s final words are “to be continued in an upcoming sequel.”

While this book may be read on its own, the reader who is following this dynamic series will see the development of character that is going on in Zach’s life as he is forced to face the challenges of his past and face himself.

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Esther Knaupp
Librarian, Santiam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon


Jim Walker’s The Desert Hawks is his fifth in the Wells Fargo Trail series. Walker continues in his tradition of excellence as high drama and suspense surround the main character of the drama, Zachary Cobb, Wells Fargo undercover agent and bounty hunter.

Walker further develops Zachary Cobb’s character and adds another element of excitement by bringing his long lost brother Julian into the story. Little did Zach dream that his assignment to track down the robber of the army payroll will lead him to his cruel and bitter one-eyed brother.

After capturing Julian and intending to bring him to justice, the brothers find themselves joining forces against a tribe of outraged and violent Indians who will stop at nothing to have their revenge on the white men. Zach is put in situations where he does not know how he will respond.

Move Baker ad to Adult Fiction, somewhere in the middle.
Rev. Adam explained that for him, Celtic spirituality had benefited him as the way that had ‘opened the gate of Glory,’ and let him share in the ‘glimpse of the Divine.’ In its less formal approach he felt that it had liberated him to be himself.

I asked if he saw a problem in confusing Celtic Christianity with pre-Christian Celtic elements; confusing ecological concern with pantheism.

“Yes, there is much confusion of Celtic Christianity and New Age, and I see this as a danger. As for pantheism,” he continued, “it is better to see God in all things than not to see him at all. If it encourages a sense of awe and gentleness towards all, all is better. But as the lesser cannot really contain the greater it is better to be a pan-entheist and to discern that all is in God. These are not mutually exclusive—it is we dwell in him and he in us. We are woven together (as is all of creation) in the Presence and Power of God.”

‘Woven together’ is a phrase with which any Celtic saint could identify. In his meditations and prayers, David Adam seeks to weave together the past and present; the saints of old and the saints of today; the transcendence of God and His immanence; the legacy of the past and hope for the future.

Thou art the peace of all things calm
Thou art the place to hide from harm
Thou art the light that shines in dark
Thou art the heart’s eternal spark
Thou art the door that’s open wide
Thou art the guest who waits inside
Thou art the stranger at the door
Thou art the calling of the poor
Thou art my Lord and with me still
Thou art my love, keep me from ill
Thou art the light, the truth, the way
Thou art my Saviour this very day.5

I left Holy Island that night with the sense that I had come in contact with God in a new and different way—or rather, an old way, made new for today.

BOOKS BY DAVID ADAM:

(Published in the USA by Morehouse Publishing.)

(Published in the USA by Morehouse)

Tides and Seasons, Triangle, 1989.


Border Lands, the Best of David Adam,  


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Volume Four—From the King James Bible to the Shores of America (1533 A.D. - 1620 A.D.)

Most Americans know about the King James Version of the Bible, with the familiar “thee’s” and “thou’s” and Old English verbs. Many of us even memorized passages from it while growing up. However, I was woefully unaware of the history behind the Bible or the struggle to get it translated into English. I didn’t know that it was this battle which precipitated the Dark Ages and energized the Reformation, making famous the likes of John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and Martin Luther, along with the infamous Nero, King Henry VIII, and Queen “Bloody Mary.” Although I’d heard of these periods and people, I didn’t know this fight linked them together. I also didn’t know that many men and women were tortured, executed, or burned at the stake for teaching their children the Lord’s Prayer in English, or for reading an English version of the Bible in college dorm rooms to fellow students, or for believing that God alone is sovereign—not the Pope or the King.

Then I watched the video series The Indestructible Book, sometimes stopping to wipe away tears. I now understand the general connections between the periods and the people. I also hold a greater, deeper appreciation for my Bible knowing that many believers died to give me freedom to read my own copy of God’s word.

These videos were shot on location in Israel, Europe, Britain, and the United States, providing a dramatic overview of important events behind the Bible, from the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai to Plymouth Rock where Pilgrim families sought freedom to worship God without governmental interference. Hosted by Ken Connolly, an elderly Englishman and Bible scholar, his accent occasionally obscures the narration until subsequent shots of a sign or subtitle make it clear to the viewer. But the tone of his narration is gentle and non-divisive. Additionally, the superb quality of this series could easily compare to the best documentaries produced for television today, with exquisite graphics, original background music by Grammy nominee Jeremy Dalton, and an attractive slipcover to accommodate all four videos for safekeeping. It’s a must for every church library and Christian school.

Due to content and graphic descriptions, it’s not appropriate for young children, but geared for older students and adults. Additional uses could include weekly Bible study groups, with discussion about doctrines and how they develop, or reasons behind today’s public support for separation of church and state.

The introduction, table of dates, glossary, gazetteer, bibliography, and index add to the usefulness of the atlas.

Carolyn Jo Ballard
Librarian, Z. J. Loussac Public Library
Anchorage, Alaska

The Bible lands. Each chapter is a double page spread. The descriptive text explains each subject in today’s language: i.e. in the chapter on Solomon and his buildings, the term labor gangs is used in the sentence, “The blocks of stone were quarried in Israel by men who were forced into labor gangs.”

Enhancements include color photographs with brief explanations. Time lines are interspersed throughout the book. Salt relief maps and scale models of illustrated sites or buildings can be created for student projects. However, information given can lead the reader to a dead end. After describing the importance of the four-sided stone pillar known as the Black Obelisk found at ancient Kalhu, no picture is shown, Kalhu can not be located on the map, and in the index the Black Obelisk is listed under obelisks.

The atlas has a very non-theological slant and Christian and parochial schools should be aware that the historical perspective is flawed. Being too general tends to leave out important truths. In Moses and the exodus chapter, the following sentence reads, “Faced by water ahead and with Pharaoh’s army behind, the Israelites crossed (on dry land), while the Egyptians’ heavy chariots became bogged down.” Scripture references are irregular and sometimes not given. More are needed for students who do not have a biblical background.

In a time when the Gospels and Acts are increasingly under attack, it is refreshing to read a historian’s survey of Jesus’ birth, resurrection and the early church which is not “destructive.”

Those looking for critical theories and speculative reconstruction’s of Jesus’ life, will have to look elsewhere.


In The Fullness of Time is a three part book examining first, the birth of Christ, second, the death and resurrection of Christ, and finally the spread of Christianity after Jesus’ resurrection. Dr. Maier accepts the accounts in the Gospels and Acts as true, and then explains them from a historian’s perspective by showing how they fit within the historical and cultural background of the first century.

Paul Maier is a professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University. He is an expert in his field and does an excellent job of making the New Testament come alive by placing it in its historical and cultural context. The book is illustrated with dozens of pictures, some in beautiful color, and contains a helpful bibliography. In The Fullness of Time is written for adults, but would probably also be suitable for a Christian high school textbook.

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u Quality - 4 Acceptability 5
Mention the name “Jesus” and nearly everyone in North America comes up with some mental image...most such images are encrusted with years of tradition from theological preconceptions, Sunday schools, books, or even from the secular media. But what was Jesus really like? And how do you know that your mental image of Jesus corresponds to who Jesus really was?

Essentially, this is the question asked and answered in Philip Yancey’s *The Jesus I Never Knew*. His first chapter, “The Jesus I thought I Knew” discusses many of these images, like the “Mister Rogers” Jesus, or the “Star Trek Vulcan” type of Jesus who is always “calm, cool, and collected”. Yancey shows evidence from the Gospels themselves, that these and other images of Jesus are not entirely accurate.

So Yancey sets out to re-examine our image of Jesus. It’s not that he destroys all previous images and then himself reconstructs the way it really was. Rather he uses the Gospels, ancient culture, and modern quotations to cause us to re-think our own views of Jesus. After reading Yancey’s book we may still not agree entirely on what Jesus was really like, but our mental image will probably be closer to the biblical view than before we read the book.

Although I have no way of knowing for sure, I suspect that *The Jesus I Never Knew* is the evangelical answer to Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time by Marcus Borg, of Jesus’ Seminar fame (HarperCollins, 1994). Borg’s book is a view of Jesus based on those few bits and pieces of the Gospels and other writings which Borg considers to be authentic. By contrast, Yancey attempts to paint a picture of Jesus which the Gospel writers intended to present.

Philip Yancey is the editor-at-large for *Christianity Today* magazine. His book is challenging, very well written, and easy to read. It won the “1996 Gold Medallion Christian Book of the Year Award” from the Evangelical Christian Publisher’s Association. The book is not indexed, but it is not the kind of book that really needs an index.

Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee
Finding God’s Will For Your Life.

Facing all the changes coming so closely create much stress for young people today. Dr. Dobson’s advice is to make God’s word a “Lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths.” God will reveal what’s at our feet and not always what is way “out in front” as we walk with him. He suggests giving each situation the “end of life test” to determine answers to some of our questions. What will it matter at life’s end? Much discussion centers on a Christian’s values. He recounts his last moments with Pete Marovich as he collapsed from basketball in Dr. Dobson’s arms.

The Myth of Safe Sex. Dr. Joe McIlhaney joins Dr. Dobson on the video to add a physician’s expertise in this hot issue facing youth today. He shares of the epidemic of transmitted diseases that is actually occurring and that syphilis is at a forty year high. He exposes the fallacy of condom use and reveals that date rape is very common. Listeners are encouraged to walk with God and save themselves for marriage.

Love Must Be Tough.

Being able to “breathe” in a relationship is the highlight of this message. Giving the partner room to make decisions and express themselves gives dignity and confidence to the marriage. He relates how he courted his wife and shares the stress points of their early relationship stages.

The Keys to a Lifelong Love.

Dr. Dobson outlines the twelve steps in the time-important process of bonding to another. He emphasizes that the bonding steps should continue after marriage to deepen the marriage bond.

Emotions: Can You Trust Them?

Dobson defines emotions as cyclical, either steady or up and down. As we understand the swing of emotions, good nutrition, exercise and rest, we make better decisions. He also points out the connection between emotional and physical health. Recognizing that our temperaments vary and we are all unique, brings much hope to us. James Dobson shares that joy comes from within, whereas happiness comes from “happenings.”

When God Doesn’t Make Sense.

Realizing that struggling in our Christian walk is a natural happening gives the listener encouragement. We wrestle harder when God doesn’t explain himself to us, and we run the risk of becoming bitter. Dobson gives three keys to maintaining our relationship with God as we wait for his answers. Our perception of God, his timing, and his perfect love are strongholds for us.

Pornography: Addictive, Progressive and Deadly.

Ted Bundy’s riveting interview is the icing on the cake in this look at the warning against pornography. Dobson wisely exposes the tendencies of men to be visual as compared to women who are more touch oriented.

The seven part videos in this series are set in an informal gathering in a Colorado lodge. Dr. Dobson shares from his heart with the young adults gathered to learn from this Christian psychologist and author. After a brief presentation, the audience is allowed a question and answer time. Many in the audience are moved by the sincere relationship Dobson is able to establish with his audience in a short amount of time. Average length is forty minutes. Two experts add their expertise along with Dobson.

When God Doesn’t Make Sense.

The book suffers from a legalistic tone. There is little joy in this book, except perhaps in its expected outcome—a self-disciplined child. Fugate says, “Parents may occasionally decide that a child has paid sufficient penalty without formal punishment. There is, however, a danger in making a habit of granting mercy. Only God has the right to require an individual to pay for his guilt.” If a child never experiences mercy from his parents, how can he understand God’s mercy? How can he learn to be merciful toward siblings and peers? Won’t he turn into an annoying little tattletale, always demanding a penalty on the other guy?

The book is attractively illustrated with charts and with realistic drawings of parents and children. Several chapters include helpful summaries. Fugate provides a bibliography, as well as appendices on the authority of the Bible, hope for failing parents, and a glossary of Greek words pertaining to children.

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How a Man Prepares His Daughters for Life

Experience makes a great teacher. Michael Farris brings firsthand knowledge based on rearing six daughters as his background for How a Man Prepares His Daughters for Life! He offers practical, yet meaningful, direction for men who sincerely desire to train and teach daughters to be godly women.

Self examination helps fathers begin the teaching process. Farris asks fathers to determine if they are a stumbling block to their daughters. He looks at the areas of: the vows about their career choices (taking time away from family), always insisting they’re right, lavishing gifts for approval, being a father in name only and afraid to relate to daughters because they are female.

Showing courtesy, positive encouragement, spiritual teaching and learning are high priorities with Farris, as well as basic rules of etiquette. He emphasizes careful listening to daughters and sets a pattern in his family with lessons on respect for authority.

Planning spiritual leadership in the family involves setting spiritual goals which he outlines for each child. Much time is spent discussing personal preparation to nourish his family. Also included is an example of how to teach his daughters to share their faith using his eight step process. The contrast of courtship versus dating provides thought provoking discussion for families, and Farris cites numerous examples of other families and their stories. Step-by-step suggestions are also given for a plan to involve daughters in civic matters.

“Treating your wife with dignity and value is the most important way to encourage your daughter to embrace the God-given gift of Motherhood. “

Farris’ writing style, from his legal background, is smooth, enjoyable and easy to follow. Realizing we’ll want to implement many of the biblical suggestions for rearing daughters, Farris admonishes us to pick a few at a time and remember it’s never too late to redeem ourselves as parents!

Life Skills For Men Series Bethany House

The books in this series follow a similar format. Each contains ten, easily read chapters and concludes with discussion questions for the reader or a group to use as the basis for sharing. It’s interesting that both Michael O’Donnell and Michael Farris share many of the same tips for preparing daughters and sons, although they carefully distinguish the differences of their roles in the family. The authors use personal family anecdotes and are highly visible and qualified to write these advice-giving tomes.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Carolyne Hearing
Retired Teacher, Freelance Writer
Raytown, Missouri


Kevin Johnson appeals to teenagers and young adults with this message: God “Wants you to find your place in his plan to change the world!” For the young person who struggles with the age old questions, Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Johnson presents a readable and exciting challenge: Catch the Wave.

The illustrations and stories relate to the world of surfing and pull the reader into the action. The key ideas continue the surfing motif with headings in bold print: Big Swell Truth #1, or Wave Catcher’s Rule #1.

The Scripture is applied to daily life using realistic life situations, yet never sounds “preachy.” The teen is led to discover that Jesus Christ expects his followers to actively serve him. Johnson lists several no-brainer things everyone can do to catch the Wave; then he goes on to challenge the youth to sign a pledge of commitment.

The first half of the book answers the question, Why?; the second half answers the How? of catching the wave to become an active Christian in the here and now. The last chapter lists organizations and briefly describes their focus to help youth find places to serve in short-term missions. Seminars are also listed; even Website addresses are given.

Youth sponsors will also be challenged by this book as they take an up-to-date look at what can be done today by the teens they are leading.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5
Delores Scarborough
College Registrar, Puget Sound Christian College
Edmonds, Washington


“Life (after high school) is a wild and dangerous river, especially if you’re not properly prepared for the long paddle...” Here is just one excerpt from this thought provoking little book written especially for a brand new high school graduate. Each one of the twenty-five short chapters is filled with compelling word pictures, practical suggestions, and frank questions the recent grad can ask himself as he is standing on the threshold of his life.

The chapter format purposefully contains a “story,” the “secret,” and the “plan” to spotlight a specific theme. Speaking in a language teens will appreciate, O’Connor pointedly informs them they are the ones in charge of their lives. They have big decisions that need to be made which must not be done haphazardly, but with great care. But the author skillfully weaves God into the picture as a force in their lives to be reckoned with. He says, “God is probably the only one in your life right now who’s not going to tell you what to do...You are free to keep walking with him or not...You can experience freedom in Jesus Christ every day or you can fry yourself with God.” The teen is led to discover that Christ expects his followers to actively serve him. Johnson lists several no-brainer things everyone can do to catch the Wave; then he goes on to challenge the youth to sign a pledge of commitment.

Each section encourages the reader to let God help him in his choices. Short assignments are given to coaxed him to weigh the cost of quick decision-making. Consider the long term. Write a life mission statement and use it as a sort of compass. There is even a chapter on allowing parents or a well-chosen mentor to be “walking encyclopedias” in his life by tapping their wisdom and partnering for their logic and input. Although the book is only 112 pages, one chapter a day would be a good way to give each concept presented time to sink in and be mulled over. O’Connor uses scriptural support effectively.

Whadd’ya Gonna Do? is one of the most practical, thoughtful gifts to come along for a recent graduate. Even older readers will be drawn into this book brimming with self-examining questions and suggestions every person could use. After reading this little book of wisdom, upon graduation a senior may no longer dread the incessant question from well-meaning relatives, “so whadd’ya gonna do?”

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5
Kari Janke
Freelance Journalist
Blanchard, Idaho


Christ in Christmas offers a rich storehouse of ideas to plan our celebration of Jesus' birth. Each week’s events begin with a scripture and Christmas song followed by a personal devotional reading, including thought provoking questions for discussion. An object lesson, prayer, and another song conclude each Sunday’s events. The themes range from expecting Jesus, to his birth, the shepherds, Magi, and the wonder of Christ himself.

Hands-on family activities go from emptying jars for object lessons to making puppets. The Christmas Eve celebration culminates with thoughts of what Jesus gives his children! James Dobson's and James Boice's devotional are most ‘child friendly.’ The other author's vocabulary needs to be clarified to younger children.

Guiding families to a better understanding of the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the focus of Christ in Easter: A Family Celebration of Holy Week. Palm Sunday, The Last Supper, Good Friday, and the Resurrection are highlighted. Age appropriate activities are planned. Preparation is helpful.

Max Lucado’s introductory story fits Jr. High and up, while discussion questions cause adults as well as kids to think. Poetic renderings are included, plus additional readings for older children.

Both of these paperbacks follow the same format: Scripture reading, songs, devotional reading or story, discussion, question time, and family activities. Each book’s design is a work of art in itself. Scripture, often highlighted in decorative borders, is set off as special. Readers confirm scripture’s role in the season’s celebration. Bible readings for each day (for the one week plan of Christ in Easter and the month long Christ in Christmas) are taken from the New International Version or the New King James. They center around each week’s theme. Printed at the bottom of each page is the step in the program.

A variety of questions pulls the studies together. Aimed at differing age levels, some are cognitive and others more reflective and thought provoking.

Most family activities require action by thinking of ways to display what has been learned. Some plan for writing out prayers to God to express feelings, or inviting neighbors over to share what the Lord has done in the family. Activities span five to thirty minutes depending on the interest level of children. Some hymns included will be new to small children.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Caroline Hearing
Retired Teacher, Freelance Writer
Raytown, Missouri


Together at Home was originally published by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 1985. It’s been recently released in a revised and expanded format (new and improved!). In this book, Dean and Grace Merrill share activities from fourteen years of Home Together Nights, which they instituted when their first child was five years old. The Merrills promote a weekly family night for a number of reasons: to keep lines of communication open, for bonding, for spiritual training, for quality time. The Merrills recommend incorporating a variety of elements into that special time: food (a meal or snack that children particularly enjoy); a special location (whether a foray to a park or a theater, or just an unusual space, like using the ping-pong table for dinner); child-friendly conversation (this is not the time to clarify the chore schedule); music; games; outreach (delivering a casseroles to the neighbor with a new baby, cutting roses to bring to a nursing home); and ten minutes of spiritual teaching (can be related to current events or children’s own lives).

Activities are suggested for seasons and holidays. Many are designed to combat worldly celebrations of materialism by focusing on events of Jesus’ life and finding ways to honor him. Others celebrate family members or revolve around a story time or scripture. The Merrills suggest ways to include children of widely-spaced ages. Many activities could be repeated at intervals of a few months or years. A whole section focuses on ideas for activities for teens.

Although you could follow the suggestions in this book word-for-word (there are about two years’ worth of ideas), it’s more likely that readers will use the book as a jumping-off point and custom-design activities for their families based on their own hobbies and interests. That’s the beauty of Together at Home—the Merrills’ love for their children and their enthusiasm about family night are contagious.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Andrea R. Huelsenbeck
Freelance Writer
Tempe, Arizona


God’s Word says “... in an abundance of counselors there is victory” and Gary R. Collins, in Family Shock, ably demonstrates this. Using research reports, journal articles, and quotes from many sources, Collins offers readers hope and optimism for the future of the family.

Beginning by defining “family,” he then discusses the influences faced by today’s families. Building his case for optimism, he inserts stories of real families who have gone through change and crisis and emerged stronger than before, including a touching one about his own.

Lists such as Traits of a Happy Family, as well as fifty short articles by notables such as Jill and Stuart Briscoe and Larry Crabb, are also scattered throughout the book, helping make his case while offering the reader practical advice. The articles written by Christians from countries or cultural backgrounds unfamiliar to the average American reader also help get across an important underlying message: no matter who we are, the future of the family is important.

“Sex, Gender and the Family” (Chapter 7) and “Single People and the Family” (Chapter 9) are particularly interesting, covering issues such as gender roles, homosexuality, and sex education, as well as pointing out the importance of singles in the family of God. Collins says, “Single people might not experience the same family shocks that married couples encounter, but we all need support, mutual encouragement, and opportunities to serve in God’s family. We must never get so enthusiastic about family values and family strengths that we forget the people who are like Jesus in at least one important way—they’re single.”

Family Shock leaves the reader hopeful as well as more skeptical of the statistics used in the media’s attempt to convince listeners of the failure of the American family. However, too many statistics and reports make the book dry in places, while some of the encouraging conclusions he arrives at seem to use as much creativity as the ones used by the media.

The sidebars, although interesting, break up the flow of Collins’ writing, causing readers who stop to read them to lose Collins’ train of thought and make the book slow reading. Collins also repeats ideas often in his effort to get his point across, which quickly becomes tedious. However, despite these weaknesses, the variety of quotes, articles and statistics used makes Family Shock a good reference book for the library of a church, counselor, or anyone else who does a lot of writing or speaking about the family.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4
Not all songs are written as a response to an ill wind which has blown into the songwriter’s life, but a surprising number are. Prolific author and retired Salvation Army officer Gariepy has researched the stories behind 100 familiar, and some not so familiar, hymns and found their roots in sorrow and pain.

The author quotes an Hasidic saying which asserts “that a person expresses deep sorrow in three ways: the person on the lowest level cries; the person on the second level is silent; the person on the highest level knows how to turn the sorrow into song.”

In the section of “Songs of History,” the author tells how in 1864 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the words on one of the most beloved Christmas carols amid the hate and destruction of the Civil War. “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” affirms the poet’s strong faith that “God is not dead; nor doth He sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men!”

Whether categorized in the music, history, or devotional section, this title will be an oft-lent listing of the 100 hymns is included.

From the apostles on through the 16th century, Christians were killed for refusing to give up their faith in Jesus Christ. They died by crucifixion, beheading, burning at the stake, and the swords of gladiators. Remarkably, their peace remained in the face of persecution and threatened death. This gives evidence to the reality of the God in whom they put their trust. As the Apostle Paul said, “But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, Romans 6:9, RSV.”

The conversational manner of writer and speaker Luci Swindol lends charm to The Martyrs, an introduction to the video series The Indestructible Book, reviewed above. She sits in her easy chair and talks about Foxe’s Christian Martyrs of the World.

In this forty minute video, Luci tells briefly about fifteen specific martyrs or groups of martyrs whose stories are included in the book. For example, Andrew the apostle preached to the spectators while he died on a cross and some of them became believers. Cicely Ormes talked to the spectators while people prepared the fire to burn her to death, telling them why she believed in the Bible. She then died with a peaceful look on her face. John Huss sang a hymn so loudly, it drowned out the sound of the flames consuming him. Frequent black and white drawings help the viewer grasp the reality of what happened.

This glimpse into the several volumes of Foxes Actes and Monuments, apparently condensed into Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, is an interesting overview of martyrdom history up to John Foxe’s day. It stimulates a desire to learn more about the faith of the martyrs. Though it can be depressing to hear the accounts of the gory killings, this makes the courage of the martyrs stand out more. They must have had supernatural strength,
The story of Desmond Tutu is an inspiring saga of one man standing for truth and unity. He is not an unbiased bystander. He is a man hated by some for his color and for his beliefs, and adored for his courage by his own people. He is a man who applies scriptural truth to his daily living and who is not afraid to stand even in the face of persecution.

This book is a bit dated in that it was published in 1988. Desmond Tutu was at the time serving a long-term prison sentence for his political stance against apartheid. He has since been released and readers will need to read the current end to the story in their newspapers.

The issues in South Africa have been discussed for many years in journals of all types. It is difficult to know every author’s bias and the reason for the stories. However, here, David winner presents both sides of the issues with a detailed history of how the situation in South Africa evolved. He does not present Desmond Tutu as the saint of the ages nor as a central cause for the unrest in South Africa. There are some vivid descriptions of the horrors of the demonstrations as well as the corruption of leaders of all parties. The pages are filled with photos which enhance the narration. The reader who is unfamiliar with the terminology or people groups is able to consult the glossary to be able to follow the history and get a general overview of the politics involved. Desmond Tutu is only one of the many strong leaders in South Africa who have stood against the brutality and demonstrations. He believes that discussion will lead to peace only when those in leadership of each group are willing to leave skin-color and historical hatred to work out a new culture for all peoples. This book is worth the reading to give an understanding of the complexities of life in South Africa.

Between the nature of the historical/cultural period and the often slow moving biographical writing style of the author, many may find the book Lucretia Mott tedious. It is, however, an interesting study of the times and culture of the Quakers, as well as a look at the early abolitionist and feminist movement. As a reference text on these subjects, Lucretia Mott is a worthy biography.


“Over the years, the scars from the terrible whippings had healed, but they were forever fresh in their minds and hearts.” Slavery scars, emotional and physical, motivate Isabella (Belle) Van Wagener to action. Watching her mother and father, owned by a Dutch immigrant, Belle feels the torment as she witnesses slave’s children ripped from family and home. Even when New York votes to gradually free slaves, Belle stands by helplessly as her aged parents flounder for a direction in their lives. Later, lacking food and firewood, they die of starvation.

Belle is sold twice. While in the possession of John Dumont, Belle falls in love with Robert, another slave. Because his master arranges Robert’s marriage to another, Belle and Robert meet secretly. Their alliance is discovered and Robert’s beating leaves him severely injured. Dumont arranges a marriage between Belle and Tom. Their similar backgrounds bind them together out of respect. Tom’s first wife was sold years earlier.

By the time Belle has four children, she discovers the Underground Railroad and meets sympathetic Quakers. She desperately wants to make wrong right and needs to channel her deep beliefs more constructively. Being criticized by fellow slaves, she doesn’t realize her desire to give blind obedience to their masters hurts the slave’s cause, in their opinion.

So, she revolts against the injustices playing out against her and leaves home and children and works for a Quaker family who aid her later in rescuing her son, Peter.

The next year Tom is freed and since their marriage is one of respect, they agree to separate. Tom dies soon. Over the years, Belle, renaming herself Sojourner Truth, actively participates in abolitionist speaking engagements nationwide. Her six-foot frame and quiet, deliberate manner coupled with soul searching speeches, demands respect from listeners. Heads of state (Abe Lincoln), abolitionists (Harriet Beecher Stowe, Susan B. Anthony) and politicians (Frederick Douglass) seek her out to aid the cause.
At eighty-six Sojourner dies and leaves a rich heritage, having spoken out against injustice and oppression and for women’s suffrage.

Grade school teachers find this type of biography helpful in classroom research as it is easily read independently. The black and white photos, gathered from many historical societies, reveal the seriousness of the times on the subject’s faces. The bibliography and detailed index provide more direction for those wanting additional information.

There is reference to Sojourner unbuttoning her blouse. Some said hers was not the voice of a woman and they wanted her to prove it. So she did.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Carolyn Hearing
Retired Teacher, Freelance Writer
Raytown, Missouri


“I am against slavery because I want to keep the white folks who hold slaves from getting sent to hell!” said Sojourner Truth, a courageous black woman who lived in America from 1797-1883. She became an articulate advocate for human rights. Born a slave named Isabella, sold three times like cattle, she obtained freedom in 1826. After working seventeen years as a household servant, she began traveling and preaching in the northeast and midwest states, demanding justice and respect for blacks and women. She believed God, whom she chose as her master, wanted her to help secure freedom and equality for all people. She lived to see blacks given the right to vote in the fifteenth amendment. After her death, the civil rights movement continued with formation of the NAACP. In 1920, the nineteenth amendment gave women the right to vote.

In this biography by Susan Taylor-Boyd, much history comes alive for the earnest reader. It is one of eight books in the People Who Have Helped The World series. Slavery, the Dred Scott Decision, Emancipation Proclamation, and Civil War are discussed in such a way as to help the reader understand both sides.

Attractive black and white drawings and color paintings scattered throughout the sixty-eight page book add interest and widen the historical viewpoint of the reader. At the end are addresses of organizations and an extensive bibliography for those interested in more information about human rights movements or about Sojourner Truth. A helpful glossary, chronology and index are included.

The author seems to be in favor of the feminist movement which has gone far beyond the equal rights Sojourner Truth demanded. The National Organization For Women (NOW), formed in 1966, won equal pay for equal work (which Truth advocated) and has helped battered women. However, when mentioning its Equal Rights Amendment of 1972, the author says nothing about the controversy involved which prevented its ratification. Neither does she mention that, in present times, NOW fights for abortion rights and rights of homosexuals. Since Sojourner Truth was a Christian, she probably would likely not have favored a movement which strives to give unbiiblical rights to some people at the expense of others. But since the biography did not portray Truth as a feminist in today’s terms, the book still has value for Christians if tempered by other viewpoints on feminism.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 3

Judith M. Gonzales
Freelance Writer
Moses Lake, Washington


This library bound edition from the Overview Series gives the reader a good idea of the importance sports plays in American life. Flowers discusses how all kinds of sports have become BIG business for all the people involved, except perhaps for the fans who are in many cases finding it hard to support players with million dollar salaries and paying high ticket prices. Yet for pointing out the problem she is also fair in describing the good will of some players and the benefits young people involved in sports derive.

Chapter headings are timely questions on the minds of today’s reader: “Is Sexism a Problem in Sports?” “Are Drugs a Problem in Sports?” These are questions that are discussed at many levels each day. Flowers writes as objectively as possible to answer the question. Since the book contains a bibliography and list of works consulted readers may decide whether or not to delve into the questions further.

Photographs, black and white charts, and cartoons are used to amplify and support the text. This would be useful for students working on reports in this area. Schools with very limited budgets may want to pass and have students use the public library copy. If money is not an issue, this title and others in the series would be welcome additions to a school library media center.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 4

Leslie Groeves Radloff
Teacher/Librarian, Emanuel Lutheran School (WELS)
W. St. Paul, Minnesota


In *My Father, My Hero*, Terry Olsen has broached a subject that will elicit many strong feelings from his readers. Olsen’s book analyzes the various roles that a father must play, from teacher to friend to hero, using a variety of tones, ranging from encouragement to instruction. It is a useful tool for fathers who wish to be an effective parent and husband.

The subject of fathers lends itself to the use of examples, anecdotes, and personal stories, and this book is full of them. Their use gives the book a personal and friendly tone while at the same time leaving the author room to instruct and advise. Olsen also uses a number of examples from his many years as a single dad to encourage those who may find themselves in a similar situation.

Each chapter concludes with a series of questions or comments to compel the reader to personalize and apply the book. The final chapter, entitled Dad the Do-er, powerfully prompts fathers to actively investigate, and if necessary, change their lifestyle.

In the chapter entitled Dad the Teacher, Olsen unequivocally advocates corporal punishment, which may make some readers uncomfortable. However, this book is an important resource for any father who wants to take his role as a parent seriously, and hopes to see his children “stand up and call him blessed.”

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Chris Steenhof
Teacher
Smithers, British Columbia, Canada


Environmentalism, as the word stands today, has fallen short of protecting and enhancing the world in which we live. We cannot focus on just the “natural” elements of the environment and assume the problem is solved. Pollution, overgrowth of populations, and misuse of our resources is but one small issue in the overall plan of wise and healthy living standards.

Gary Cochran, in his guide book, *Shaping Our Environmental Conscience*, reiterates the importance of understanding the sociobehavioral aspect of our environment—attitudes that effect the way we and others live. An example is how urban slums become caught in an endless cycle of non-caring landlords in a non-caring environment where survival can become base and hazardous to those who dwell there.
Improvements are possible, but without involving every aspect of life: natural, economic, and social, the “answers” are a placebo at best.

The author states the importance of balance when trying to achieve a healthy, workable environment. We are responsible to be good stewards of all that we have been given, which involves more than just our own personal living space. Balance is important in our views, in finding what responsibilities we have to help gain and maintain a healthy environment, and in how we deal with the organizations that have been established to speak to environmental issues.

This book gives an interesting appraisal of what environment really is and offers some practical action that can be taken, as well as giving realistic views on what dangers and successes we face as a society as a whole.

Marlin H. Kvenin
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


From the series People Who Have Helped the World, Maria Montessori is a biographical as well as an educational book that is both interesting and thought-provoking. In this attractive paperback book every double-page spread contains at least one black and white or color photograph and/or painting. In addition to this, captions and quotes are arranged in the sidebars of every page.

The story of Maria Montessori is fascinating and informative. It tells of the hopeless lives of the poor in Italy, those for which Maria had compassion. It gives specific details to show how she used her unconventional educational methods with great success.

Michael Polland’s book is a wonderful source to explain the philosophy behind the Montessori movement, but the reader should be aware that this is not necessarily based on Christian principles. This is seen in ideas such as education begins with the child not the teacher, the concept that children prefer work to play, and the belief that teachers should not interfere with a child’s freedom of choice.

Other books in this series of People Who Have Helped the World include subjects such as Marie Curie, John Muir, Mother Teresa, Sojourner Truth, Desmond Tutu, Raoul Wallenberg, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


Philosophy of Christian School Education is the quintessential textbook for the college level course of the same name. The introduction and eighteen chapters are written by seventeen different eminently qualified educators. The basic premise of the book is that the mission of education is the orderly transmission of truth from one generation to the next. When God is omitted from that process, the “truth” is severely flawed.

The book begins with a general overview of philosophy, narrowing down to Christian educational philosophy. Subsequent chapters focus on the effect of Christian educational philosophy on all aspects of Christian schooling, including the learning process, the students, the teachers, methods, special needs, discipline, classroom atmosphere, relationships, and society.

The text is attractively laid out. Each chapter begins with Targets for Understanding, questions to help the student focus on the important concepts. The margins contain quotes from biblical, historical, and contemporary sources which support the text. Charts illustrate the material, and sidebars offer supplementary insights. Each chapter closes with a Summary, a list of Concepts for Comprehension, some endnotes, references, and a biography of the contributor(s) of that chapter.

What is most remarkable about Philosophy of Christian School Education is its scope. It is a thorough examination of every facet of Christian educational philosophy.

Andrea R. Hulsenbeck
Freelance Writer
Tempe, Arizona


Discipline means discipline. The ultimate goal of a classroom teacher is to motivate student self-discipline in order to please God. Good discipline encompasses class routine, teacher preparation, intervention strategies, and building a positive relationship between student and teacher. Sharon R. Berry’s ideas on discipline are teacher tested and will help both new and experienced teachers prevent and deal with negative classroom situations. Readers will find this unique book jam-packed with great practical ideas. Primarily designed for classroom teachers, parents and Sunday School teachers will also find many helpful suggestions.

Although a short book (only 24 pages long), this excellent resource contains one hundred well-organized ideas. Each idea begins with a succinct statement followed by a short explanation. An area called “Simple Principles” talks about praying for students and treating parents as partners. “Class Preparation” includes organization, advance preparation, using seating charts, and establishing consistent routines. “General Procedures” gives suggestions on positive student-teacher communication that forestalls problems. “Specific Intervention Techniques” provides methods that overcome specific problems. “Individual Intervention” focuses on problems that have escalated. The book closes with a list of words that positively affirm students, such as “Sensational, Spectacular, First Rate.” These words also describe this book!

Christian educators are called, not merely to endless paperwork, lesson planning, and distilling facts and ideas into bite size learnable morsels, but to disciple and nurture the students entrusted to them. Kenneth O. Gangal's book Called to Teach clarifies that call. Each of the eighteen chapters contain messages (now updated) given at the yearly teacher conference sponsored by the Association of Christian Schools International. The challenge is directed at Christian School teachers to influence students daily and to focus on Christ and the Word of God as the main subject and foundation of all material taught.

This is the type of book that grows on you. It can be used as a personal or group devotion book. Although primarily designed for Christian school teachers, both Sunday School and public school teachers could benefit from the concepts given. It also contains a yearly journal of the growth of teachers could benefit from the concepts given. Black and white pictures frame bits of wisdom and add to selected scriptures.

Paula Stewart Marks
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon


All teachers give homework of some variety. This book explores the question of what homework should be given to what grade level. What makes homework effective? How can a teacher find the most beneficial assignments that have the most long term effectiveness? What factors will motivate students to complete and hand in homework? How do teachers effectively involve parents in helping at home? How can students become better organized so they remember assignments? How can students effectively take notes? Ollie Gibbs brings together excellent resources and careful research to answer these questions, plus many more.

This is an excellent resource for any classroom teacher. What teacher can resist finding out about “Hassle Free Homework,” or “Shortcuts for Correcting Homework”? This book is designed to make homework easier for both the teacher and the student. It is a well-organized step by step type of book that is easily read and assimilated, but deep enough to make you go back and dig for more tips and ideas. It will be an asset for any teacher’s library.

Paula Stewart Marks
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon


Designed for use in British schools where religious training is mandatory, Sharon Swain brings many fresh ideas that can be used in Sunday School, family devotions, or Christian school chapels and classrooms. Set up as a ten week curriculum, this book uses every-day objects to convey spiritual truths. One example given is to take a roll of toilet tissue (which shows perfect order), wrap it carefully around the class, then try to rewrap to the original order. This is an example of sin and trying to fix up our own lives when we fail.

Subjects given fit all people, such as thinking of others’ needs, learning to listen, recognizing diversity, seeing God’s power. Americans will encounter some cultural problems in using the book, because of unfamiliarity with English history, The Church of England, the British Royal Family, British words, meanings, and spelling. Overall, the book is very practical and imaginative and the cultural differences seem to add to the fun.

Paula Stewart Marks
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon

Another entry in the Lucent World History Series and very much like the rest. Good overall information, adequate reading list, heavy on the primary and secondary sources but colorless, rather lifeless. The volume is divided into three parts: fascinating discoveries in Europe between 1550 and 1900; how people learned to be scientists; and how science affected the way people saw their world and how they live. In four hundred years people’s ways of thinking were transformed opening up the door for the discoveries of the twentieth century.

Many interesting tidbits of information to delight those interested trivia from the derivation of the word algebra to Descartes method of problem solving. Heavy on the male scientists of the age, Marie Curie is mentioned in conjunction with her husband. The information is more of an overview than comprehensive and thus is good for a beginning.

However as with the other the volumes this is grey and drab. Pages are well-designed with text broken up by illustrations. There is a glossary of terms and a clear index. Authors show the arguments of the church against science in an unbiased way.

Christian readers today will think about how we have all been blessed through the hard work and discoveries of these scientists whether they were believers or not. Teachers in Christian schools will be able to point out how the Lord allowed these discoveries to be made and how through science many of the prevailing superstitions were put to rest. As with the other titles in this series, schools with small budgets should consider carefully. More useful for junior or senior high than the elementary.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 4

Leslie Greaves Radloff
Teacher/Librarian, Emanuel Lutheran School(WELS)
W. St. Paul, Minnesota


Marie Curie was born in Poland, which was actually ruled by the Tsar of Russia. Polish culture and education was outlawed. When Marie was eight, her older sister died of typhus and when she was ten, her mother died of complications from tuberculosis. In spite of these weighty circumstances, her father filled the lives of his children with the joy of learning. He translated the literatures of other languages into Polish when they were not available.

“Marie’s early life was...a time when the love of learning was instilled deep in the growing child. To have culture and knowledge, to use your mind and thoughts to become useful in the world, to enrich your experience more and more and more, these were the aims which their teacher-parents held high before them.”

When Marie was finally accepted into the University in Sorbonne in France, she had already taught herself many of the subjects necessary for university entrance which had not been available to her. Imagine her frustration upon entering her first class and realizing that her ability to understand spoken French was totally inadequate to complete her education. Undaunted, she applied all of her energy to reach her goal of becoming a scientist. She lived with meager necessities and studied late into the night.

As she began her research projects, she met Pierre Curie and as they worked together they also fell in love. Marie was so intensely involved in her study of uranium and the possibilities that may exist for their medical use, she extended her research and became the first woman in all of Europe to ever complete a doctorate program.

In very primitive conditions with a poorly outfitted laboratory, Marie and Pierre worked together. Their discovery of radium has resulted in the widespread treatments for cancer which are used today. With the coming of the wars, she went to the war hospitals and worked with wounded soldiers, using x-rays for diagnosis. However, she had no idea that her research and use of radium without protection, was taking a toll on her own body. The discoveries that she made have saved the lives of many people but it actually killed her. We now know that radium is a highly radioactive substance. Marie gave her life to help mankind.

The story of Marie Curie is an easy-to-read narrative and the pages are filled with pictures, photographs, and many drawings of her life and work. Readers will be fascinated to see the many items of memorabilia which have been dedicated to Marie’s life and work—stamps, statues, medals. Marie, Pierre, and their daughter Irene won the Nobel Prize—three times to one family; however, her goal was to find scientific answers, not to be recognized. There is no mention of her religious life but her dedication to her work will be inspiring reading to students of any age.

The bibliography cites other works on the life of Marie Curie and other nuclear scientists, nuclear energy, and radiation including magazines and organizations which provide more up-to-date information. A detailed glossary will be of particular assistance in understanding the scientific terms. The chronology at the end of the book give a perspective of the major events and accomplishments of her life. An index is also included.

u Quality - 3 § Acceptability - 4

Sharon Ann Rau
Librarian, Valley Christian Schools
Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada


Jake Page has written a rather charming book not strictly about, or for the birds, but with enough information about birds to make you feel as though you have learned a great deal about starlings, finches, chimney swifts, and others and at the same time have gained a glimpse into the author’s philosophy of life. Charming.

This is a book to read in segments, to allow for reading and re-reading, pondering ideas. His chapters begin with a common topic, junk mail for instance, that mountain which seems to grow daily, yet as Page points out it is direct, usually ambiguous, and sometimes surprising. And as he points out again, order one thing and you are on everyone’s list FOREVER! All this because of a bird feeder. Readers will relate to this.

Another essay that caused much reflection was “The Golden Travel Guide.” Baby boomers will remember those little volumes: Birds, Sea shells, Trees etc. Page’s *Golden Field Guide to Birds of North America* was a reminder to him of the pleasures of years of traveling. Certain entries triggered memories of places where enjoyable and memorable things occurred. Delightful. The rose-breasted grosbeak near the Hopi house, peeps along the Californian coast. The essay is sure to bring back the readers’ memories of their own trips.

Thoroughly enjoyable but four letter words do appear, not often, but they wouldn’t have to be there at all to make a point. The author’s musings are enjoyable enough.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 4

Leslie Greaves Radloff
Teacher/Librarian, Emanuel Lutheran School(WELS)
W. St. Paul, Minnesota


From the first description of Ndovu’s birth to the end of this book Caras engages and keeps the reader’s attention. Each day of this young elephant’s life is described so vividly that the reader feels as though he is in Africa watching the elephant herd as it forages for food, plods on until water is found or is attacked by poachers. All the while the author has been giving you the facts about elephants, Africa, and the decimation
YOUNG ADULT FICTION

of the elephant herds. Elephants are still being slaughtered for their tusks in spite of the laws forbidding ivory trade.

The weakest part of the book is not the writing but the fact that the photographs are in black and white, no doubt to keep the cost down. Readers will want to use some of the juvenile non-fiction with color photographs or video available to picture the setting in full color.

Caras makes a powerful statement that it’s up to people to ensure that the elephant survives in its native habitat into the next century. He points out that the food and water needs of the elephant are at odds with the farmers of the area and that ivory is still being bought and sold today even though it is illegal to do so.

There are vivid descriptions of life and death in this story but none that is gratuitous. Poachers are killed and their bodies left for the animals, one poacher shot but not dead is killed by a single bullet fired by one of the government men...this is part of life in Africa. The saddest, most poignant parts are the descriptions of the members of the elephant herd looking at the slaughtered family member or coming upon the carcass of a long-dead elephant in an elephant graveyard.

While not a particularly happy story, it was not all sad either. The family life of the elephant was described through the eyes, (ears?) of Nvodu as he learns how to live and survive in Africa.

Readers learn many interesting facts about elephants as they follow Nvodu and his family from place to place.

Readers will find this all interesting but a very specialized topic and unless there is a high demand for that in your school library I’d wait for the paperback version or rely on the public library. This will not circulate often in spite of its merits.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 4

Leslie Greaves Radloff
Teacher/Librarian, Emanuel Lutheran School (WELS)
W. St. Paul, Minnesota


The many, many photographs, drawings, and other illustrations that look like old prints and engravings help make Strange and Wonderful Aircraft, by Harvey Weiss, an incredible source of information about man learning to fly. He begins with reports of fanciful legends and stories of man’s first attempts to fly like a bird. Then he makes a good break toward practical reality with kites and balloons, and then gliders. He explains what people were learning about aircraft: like the need for a tail for stability, how a curved wing works, and the use of the fixed wing. Weiss then explains carefully how air flight works and why some early attempts failed.

“The Wright brothers, as well as most other inventors, had many problems to solve before they were successful.” He defined the Wright brothers’ flight as the first plane that raised itself by its own power.

Included throughout the book are instructions and graphics on how to make various models, like a glider, a paper airplane, and a flying-propeller helicopter. Some of the illustrations are cartoon figures attempting various things, or explanations about how a principle works. Some are actual copies from the National Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian. All of the pictures are in black and white, or black and white with blue added that gives them an older, authentic feeling. The text is written in a straightforward manner, as if to answer questions or satisfy the reader’s curiosity, not like a textbook. A massive amount of information is given for the length of the book. It concludes with an informal bibliography, written in paragraph style about where to find further information.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Judy Belcher
Teacher: Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


A bicycle means different things to different people. It may be used for fun or possibly for exercise. Knowing your bicycle is important for proper care and maintenance. David Hautzig begins with a photograph of a fully assembled mountain bike and has labeled all the parts. Then starting at the beginning with the types of materials bikes are made of, he shows you step by step how a mountain bike is manufactured. Each step is explained in detail and accompanied by a full-color photograph. You can truly understand the reasons behind why the bike must be made the way it is in order to work properly.

To complete the book, Hautzig gives advice on buying the right size bike, how to properly maintain your bike, and bicycle riding safety.

A very interesting book. There is much technical information included, but it is accompanied by easy to understand illustrations. The information is presented in such a way as to intrigue you. Each color photograph also includes a descriptive caption. Through each step the operation of the bike is explained. David Hautzig has found a way to make this book interesting to children and adults alike. This is a hardbound book with a good quality library binding to stand up to frequent use. A thorough and complete treatment of the subject. A fine package.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Marcia Snyder
Librarian, Valley Christian School
Missoula, Montana


Many parents will find themselves out of their comfort zones while reading Steering Them Straight. It is thorough in its examination of these serious issues and the steps parents need to take to prevent their children from falling prey— or to rescue them.

Stephen Arterburn is a well-known counselor and the co-founder of Minirth Meier New Life Clinics. Jim Burns has been active in youth ministry for over twenty years. They illustrate chapters on such difficult topics as homosexuality, AIDS, runaways, and eating disorders, with insights drawn from actual case studies. They address mysteries such as why one child experiments with drugs while another does not.

In reading Chapter 2, “The Evolution of the Dysfunctional Family,” some parents may recognize themselves and be tempted to stop reading. I would urge readers to continue, as painful as it may be. The message of this book is that parents save lives by committing themselves to spending time with their kids—actively expressing their love, having fun together, lavishing attention on them, and teaching their children right from wrong through example and frank discussion.

The book’s strong point is its practical advice. Most chapters end with a section called You Can Take to prevent their children from falling prey— make a Difference. Arterburn and Burns tell us how and why kids fall into destructive behaviors. They list warning signs, expose parental conduct that contributed to their children’s problems, and give positive strategies that parents can use so that their kids won’t be deceived into temptation.

For parents whose children have already succumbed, Steering Them Straight offers hope through parent intervention and professional counseling. The appendix gives resources such as organizations, books and curricula dealing with the crises delineated in the book.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Andrea R. Huelshenbeck
Freelance Writer
Tempe, Arizona

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If you’ve thought that teaching a younger to read was simply sitting down and using flash cards and phonics, then author Steven Bialostok has some things he wants to say to you. Forget about using those old workbooks and tear out sheets; as a reading specialist, Bialostok believes they’re mostly a waste of your child’s time and your money. Forget, too, about fretting and worrying over your child’s lack of ability to read at the kindergarten age. Says Bialostok, many children are simply not ready.

So what does this teacher and lover of fine books recommend? Parents should make it a habit to read to their children, daily if possible. Parents should be readers themselves, so children can identify with the love of books just as their parents do. As Mom or Dad sits down and takes a child or two upon his/her lap, reading becomes a special family time. One that kids correlate with warmth and love. Thus, reading itself is a wondrous vehicle for learning, knowing, and understanding more about our world from a safe vantage point.

Bialostok advocates that learning to read is a lengthy process, one that takes time and patience. He firmly believes that no shortcut (or drilling sessions) can teach a child to read adequately. There are stages in learning to read and also some important do’s and don’ts. Teach your children to enjoy good literature and expose them to a wide range of it, encourages the author.

The author maps out the stages of child development from infancy through the elementary school years; and looks at the types of experiences children need at each particular stage in order to grow emotionally and intellectually. He attempts to describe how families can build on natural strengths and tailor their approaches to each child’s unique set of characteristics and needs.

There are chapters devoted to each of the major challenging personality types which identify characteristics of that type and strategies for dealing with the child of that temperament. He identifies five major types of temperament: the highly sensitive child, the self-absorbed child, the defiant child, the inattentive child, and the active/aggressive child. He cautions that we are a mix of these traits, but by identifying patterns of reaction and behavior, we have some clues as to how to respond most effectively to children.

He states that the parent’s goal is to understand the natural tendencies of the child and help them find better ways to cope. He offers a five-step process in relating to children that will enhance growth. These steps include: floor time (one-on-one), problem solving time, empathy, progress in small steps, and limit setting. Dr. Greenspan’s examples of using these strategies make for understandable solutions for parents.

This is a helpful book, especially for parents who are at their wit’s end as to what to do with a particular child. It is an excellent tool for identifying the traits of the difficult child, but also is very usable for any parent trying to raise healthy, responsible children. The Christian parent can enhance their parenting skills with Dr. Greenspan’s approach, especially with relating the values of the Gospel in each of these strategies.

To the parent or professional who lives or works with children, this book offers some thoughtful reasons and solutions for difficult behavior in children. Dr. Greenspan, a child psychiatrist at George Washington University Medical School, proposes that for some children there are indeed physical and neurological factors that determine the way a child perceives his world and reacts. Dr. Greenspan has found in his work that there are certain strategies that can be used with challenging children which promote healthier reactions and more acceptable behavior. His approach focuses on how “nature” and “nurture” work in tandem. He maintains that life with an initially challenging or “difficult” child doesn’t have to be a perpetual battleground. His goal is to provide a general philosophy that parents can use to gear child rearing for the normal easily adjusted child plus specific strategies for more challenging children.

The writer shows the historical significance of painter, his works, and the place in Mexican history as well as art history. For those who know little about Rivera he was a contemporary of Picasso, Braque, Matisse, and Modigliani, artists living in Paris in the early 1900’s. As a leader of the Mexican Renaissance, Rivera went back to his native roots to portray the common people of Mexico in their fight against the Spanish. To bring his message to the people he used large scale murals portraying events in Mexican history.

These murals and others works by Rivera are reproduced in the text. Color reproduction is good and the picture captions clear. Readers learn how the impact of events, art, and other paintings studied by Rivera in France and Italy influenced his own painting style. Also included are an index and a short suggested reading list. While younger students may enjoy looking at the reproductions of some of the paintings and murals, the text is for a junior or senior high school reader, or an interested adult.

From the People to Know series, Bill Cosby, Actor and Comedian by Michael A. Schuman would be a welcome addition to any library. The colorful book cover gives the book an inviting appearance. Its library binding and laminated hard cover make it a good investment for heavy circulation. While its length of 124 pages of large margins and very readable print make it an option for reluctant readers, it is interesting for readers of any age.

Frequent black and white photographs throughout the book add to the interest of the text. Pages at the end include a bibliography of books for further reading.

The first chapter begins in 1964 as Bill Cosby is beginning to make a name for himself as a comedian and television star. It then goes back and tells about his early childhood and schooling. Schuman goes on to describe Cosby’s journey to success and gives many details of what was happening in the United States which influenced his rise to fame.

Schuman, who has written for numerous magazines and newspapers and traveled extensively around the United States and the world, makes the reading of his book both interesting and informative.
Other books in this series of People to Know include people such as Clarence Thomas, John Glenn, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Ross Perot.

Esther Knapp
Librarian, Santiam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon


This story of the early life of Pistol Pete Maravich begins with an older Pete explaining to his son what has happened. This narration in first person continues throughout the movie, along with the drama and dialogue. Pistol Pete is consumed with the game of basketball and dribbles his ball everywhere. His father, the coach of the nearby Clemson College basketball team, continually encourages him to dream and go after his dream. Pete begins to play on the high school team when he is a short eighth grader. Some of his moves are spectacular and it is soon evident that he will go far. He encounters various difficulties, primarily socially; and he sees himself as different from those around him.

While this is a very good story and the actor playing young Pete plays some incredible basketball, his acting was really not very convincing. He does talk about how uncomfortable he is in some situations, but the viewer does not feel the depth of the emotion that he talks about. While the original music adds to the story, the audio quality is a little weak in places. The video itself does not mention God or a relationship with him. The way that Pistol Pete’s father lived through him and the pressure he put on him did not feel very healthy. The video comes with a Parenting Guide encouraging dads to spend more time with their sons and giving some advice about how to go about it. The written material also summarizes Pete’s basketball life through college and into the pros, and then into his relationship with Jesus Christ before his death at age forty.

Judy Belcher
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


To “sacrifice” in baseball parlance means to give oneself, or be called upon to bunt, “sacrifice,” so that, while they’re thrown out at first base, a runner can safely go to second base. Tim Burke was a major league pitcher for eight seasons. He understands the sacrifice. But he understands it not only on a professional level, but on a personal level as well.

Major League Dad is an autobiography designed with a tag-team approach by Tim and his wife, Christine. Written in the first-person, sections are subtitled with either “Tim” or “Christine” so that the reader knows whose perspective they are getting. Beginning with a short childhood history of both Burkes, the narrative picks up steam when they meet and marry. Tim’s rise in the professional baseball arena also plays a significant part in the story. But even readers who are not sports fans will enjoy the main theme of the book, which is the Burke children, and the fact that Tim walked away from a lucrative, six-figure baseball contract at the age of thirty-four to spend more time with them and with Christine.

If possible, hankies should be “loaned” with this book, since the reader will be moved to tears by its considerable pathos. The Burkes’ struggle with infertility will strike a chord with those who also experience this pain. Their decision to adopt special-needs children from foreign countries may be hard to understand, but definitely will be admired. Tim’s abuse of alcohol in his early adult years, as well as both his and Christine’s difficult childhoods, are certain to stir the reader’s emotions.

A recommended reading list on several specific topics, as well as information on adoption, is included. More than just another “sports biography,” this title would find a welcome place in any library’s marriage, parenting, or Christian living sections.

Hey Dad! includes “Perfect Vacation” Planner Tips, such as “The emergency roadside telephone you desperately need will be temporarily out of order.” And, “Deluxe,” in motel parlance, simply means an additional $10 room charge for putting stale mints on your pillow.

While the humor section of a school or church library may be one of the smaller categories, nevertheless, the lending activity of such books should increase as we see the value of laughing at ourselves. This title will help in that regard.

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fiction which has transported children and adults alike to “cross a great frontier” to convert, even to baptize, [their] imagination,” as C. S. Lewis described his encounter with MacDonald’s writing.

The publisher has combined two previously released single volumes of short fairy tales and stories into one volume and added one short story, “Stephen Archer.” Editor Sadler is very familiar with MacDonald, having also edited An Expression of Character: Selected Letters of George MacDonald, an earlier release by the same publisher. This edition is made even more appealing by the illustrations of MacDonald’s contemporary, Arthur Hughes. These two creative giants, who “shared the same visionary sensitivity for the relation of the real to the ideal and the angelic,” were introduced by a mutual friend, sculptor Alexander Munro.

In the introduction, Sadler, an English professor, gives the reader who may be new to MacDonald’s stories a framework of background in order to better understand the writer and his tales. He credits MacDonald with creating his own kind of fairy tale. “As he continued throughout his life to search for the proper form for his visions and dreams, MacDonald translated his ideas into three basic variations of the fairy tale, which he attempted to develop: the domestic story, the double story or parable, and the read-aloud tale.”

Although many MacDonald fans find his works abounding with symbolism and meaning, he denied that his stories had any one motivation or allegorical meaning. He claimed “that the meaning of his stories exists only in the mind of the individual reader and not in any allegorical pattern imposed on them.” “And,” he added, “children are not likely to trouble you about the meaning. They find what they are capable of finding, and more would be too much.”

One recurring theme in MacDonald’s tales is the Wise Woman, also known as Mistress North Wind. Her biographical roots lay in MacDonald’s grandmother Isabella Robertson, who lived next door. Apparently a woman of great religious fervor, strong sense of justice, and an equally strong will, she made a deep impression on MacDonald as he grew.

No school or church fiction shelf would be complete without this 558-page collection of some of the best fantasy fiction ever penned.


A. A. Milne has created one of the favorite sets of children’s characters in western literature. Only Peter Cottontail can rival the Pooh as a character that endures reading to children over and over again. Although Peter has escaped analysis, here Pooh has not.

Williams takes statements of Pooh and his friends and compares their wit and insights with the western philosophers from the ancient Greeks through modern existentialism. He insists that the Pooh stories were “no mere children’s classic, unless, of course, we take it as an example of truths hidden from the wise and revealed to babes and sucklings.” (p.2)

The illustrations are of good quality and accent the text nicely. This work is especially suited for those who already own earlier works that the text nicely. This work is especially suited for those who already own earlier works that


Let your imagination soar as you take a visual journey back in time. Actually see the inside of burial tombs, sunken ships, and pyramids of old. In Viking’s Tombs & Treasures readers will delight in the see-through scenes. Illustrated with colorful detailed pictures, this informative volume provides in-depth background information on the burial customs of people from around the world.

Readers will travel around the world to learn about Tutankhamen, Philip of Macedonia, Tamerlane, El Dorado, and The Taj Mahal among many others. Each topic provides the historical uncovering/evidence, burial customs common to the people, descriptions of the tomb itself, any known treasures found, maps of the area and more.

The Celts is another book in the Viking series. Unlike Tombs & Treasures, an overview of many peoples’ customs, this volume deals solely with the history and life of the Celts. Using the same format of providing four see-through pictures, readers will be able to view inside a typical Celt’s home, look into their underground burial site, see what a broch is like, and take a peek into a Christian place of worship. This book explains in detail all facets of life regarding the Celts.

While highly informative, there are a few illustrated pictures of nude models. In Tombs and Treasures and The Celts each particular people’s spiritual beliefs are discussed and examined; many of which are unacceptable to Christians.


Another well-written entry in the field of ancient history, and teachers who have read and used Nardo’s The Panic Wars and Caesar’s Conquest of Gaul in class will be happy with this volume too, but they will have to encourage students to pick up this book because it is drab and because ancient history is oh, so, ancient. For classes studying Greek civilization, Greek and Mediterranean history, and/ or the classics, this volume gives a broader understanding of the times. This title will flesh out the Eyewitness Ancient Greece because of having more depth of information.

Nardo explains the “Age of Pericles” to the unsophisticated reader in terms that are very understandable. Pericles, according to Plutarch, made “Athens the greatest and richest of all cities”. This is the time when the great buildings of Athens were erected, the times of the wars between the city-states of Greece, the battle of Marathon, and war with Persia. There are so many ways to tie this in to the study of secular and Bible history.

Again the primary and secondary source quotes bring the story to life. The index and bibliography as well as works cited lead the reader to explore other sources as well although the titles may be somewhat beyond the reading level of the average student using this volume. In the right setting this will be a useful addition to the library.

Illustrations are interesting, but are black and white, so that it is difficult to see the details of the art, particularly when they are of a frieze or relief. Some of the other illustrations work better but there is no life to the design, no eyecatchers and young readers may well just pass them over thus losing much of the feel for the time period. A great loss since ancient art can be very stunning and appealing when the details are clear and
because Greek art and architecture influenced so many other cultures. Maps are clear and usable. This would be useful in the right setting but consider carefully how many students will use this volume.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 4

Leslie Greaves Rudloff
Teacher/ Librarian, Emanuel Lutheran School(WELS)
W. St. Paul, Minnesota


If you or your students have ever searched for a book on World War I which was easily understood and interesting at the same time, this book is for you! Editor John D. Clare has beautifully crafted a wide ranging history of this far-reaching war. Contents include the prelude to the disaster, the murder at Sarajevo, the first moves into the war, draft registration and enlistment, trench warfare, life in the trenches, casualties, position warfare, the eastern front, Russia, weapons used, air warfare, the war at sea, America and her role, the shortages on the homefront during the war years. It is easily the war history buff, but also to those interested in many facets of the war not commonly found in books of this type. The front and back pieces contain maps and timelines useful to and easily accessed by the reader. An index is included. If the rest of this series lives up to the standard of this volume, it will be a must for school libraries.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Judy Driscoll
Teacher, Christ the King Academy
Poulsbo, Washington


Author Nancy Warren Ferrell has achieved a notable accomplishment in her coverage of Little Big Horn—she has taken a well-known, much written historical event and revitalizes it. She begins with recounting the history of the North American Indian, how life was for them before the Europeans arrived. By reviewing the history of the relationship between white settler and North American Indian the reader can comprehend why the Battle of Little Big Horn came to be. Through documentation and well-woven historical details it is clear how the tragic battle occurred.

This makes for a sound book for student reports and research since it is just under 130 pages and has a variety of bibliographical references. Another noteworthy aspect is how the author presents the information much like a fast paced novel, making it an engaging read for students.

Other books in the American History series are *Native Americans and the Reservation and Japanese-American Internment*. The books both cover shameful episodes of our American history: the relocation of people where there has been no crime, except for being victims of prejudice.

*Native Americans and the Reservation* by Anita Louise McCormick indicates how once the Europe settlers became self-sufficient, peaceful relations with the Indians began to deteriorate. McCormick gives insight, both past and present, on the conflict between the United States government and the Native American. This book, while not essential, would serve as an interesting supplement to Indian history studies.

David K. Fremon’s book *Japanese-American Internment* looks at how at our nation unjustly, and at times viciously, turned against a people simply because of their ancestry. Filled with first person accounts, historical references and documents this book is an important contribution to W.W.II studies.

u Quality - 4 § Acceptability - 5

Pam Webb
Homeschool Teacher, Freelance Writer
Priest River, Idaho


Marvin Olasky strips away the myth about the Christian foundations of American society and gives his readers a realistic look at both the good and bad, the beautiful and the ugly sides of American political and religious life in the 1700’s. How I wish this historical overview had been available in the early 70’s when I was working on my American Studies degree. This book really fills a void in presenting an unbiased view of America’s Christian roots. Certainly every Christian college library should have this book and Christian college professors should use this text in their U. S. History courses.

In the opening chapter Olasky describes the early struggles of the colonies as the people formed their local city and colony governments, and tried to get along with the governing officials sent from London. All too often these officials got their job because of connections, not because of ability or training. Most of these people were corrupt morally. Olasky describes this period as “the ABCs of decadence—adultery, bribery, cover-up.”

There were many theological battles fought during this century as the English sponsored Anglicans sought to control both the church and the government as they did at home, but were opposed violently by the dissenters who had fled to America to establish freedom of religion and especially freedom from the church of England. The reader gets a good overview of this religious battle that still emerges in American politics: the separation of church and state.

The author shows his readers how the original colonists fought through and thought through their individual religious, political, and philosophical differences, forming various coalitions to eventually unite the colonies under the Confederacy to declare their independence from England. The reader also gets a very candid look leaders of this new nation: Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, and others.

The book is well documented with fifty-eight pages of endnotes, twenty-four pages of bibliography, and an index. This strength may also be the book’s weakness, as many paragraphs are full of quoted material that is difficult to read, especially when original sources are used with out-of-date spelling and vocabulary. There are eight pages of black and white photographs of the major American patriots who helped write the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.

u Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Delores Scarbrough
Registrar, Puget Sound Christian College
Edmonds, Washington

J A N U A R Y , 1 9 9 7

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C H R I S T I A N  L I B R A R Y  J O U R N A L
This well-written volume follows the same format as the others in the Lucent World History Series. After the foreword, the same one used in each volume, the reader is lead to a timeline of important dates in American History beginning in 1607 with Jamestown and continuing through to 1789 when Washington was inaugurated as first president. An index, bibliography for further reading, and a list of works consulted are included. However, these lists are very selective and readers will want to consult the card catalog for more in depth reading.

All illustrations, reproductions of pictures, charts and maps are black and white which makes the volume rather drab. Even the cover is a primarily grey with a colored picture, This volume is not as colorful or eye-catching as the Hakim series on American history, even though they too have black and white illustrations.

The arrangement of this volume does make it readable and easy to use, text and illustrations with some sidebars of information. A variety of primary and secondary sources as well as quotes are used to expand and reinforce facts. This title and the series have a lot going for it and except for the drabness of the design it is useful.

Readers younger than sixth grade will need to use this volume with guidance to find specific topics. They may want to turn to the Cambridge title of the same name, or the Brown Paper Bag Series although that is not as in depth in scope. Older readers may find the pages rather dull, but a resourceful instructor will be able to find color reproductions of most of the illustrations with little or no effort, and many newer American history textbooks now have the same illustrations used here in color.

The difficulty here is that this volume is up against some very strong entries in the field which the students will gravitate toward because of the attractiveness and readability. Librarians will want to look at all the possibilities before making a final choice, a choice which may well come down to cost.

Of the making of many Lincoln biographies there is no end; more ink has probably been expended recounting the Lincoln legend than blood spilled during the Civil War—so, why this book? One of a series including Washington, Jefferson, FDR, Truman, and Reagan, The Lincoln Way, distinguishes itself from other juvenile presidential biographies by focusing on the way the president made his decisions. Chapters one through six present the historical stage setting and tell of Lincoln’s early life and character; the remaining chapters (seven through thirteen) tell how Lincoln resolved six major problems of his administration. These included the decision to fight in the first place, the decision to back down in the Trent affair, the decision not the change the cabinet, the decision to free the slaves, the decisions regarding his generals, and the unfinished decision: reconstruction.

Except for the Trent affair and the decision not to change his cabinet, these dilemmas are familiar to most readers. Mr. Morris offers a conventional historical analysis of these problems. The reader feels like applauding Lincoln as he springs a trap for his conniving Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase, as the decision not to change the cabinet is recounted.

Empathy with one’s subject can be a danger for authors of biography but Mr. Morris has written an evenhanded account. He mentions that Lincoln was often melancholic, lacked close friends, and did not like to talk about his past. Overall, however, the account of the six decisions made by Lincoln reinforce the legend. Lincoln is portrayed as an enigmatic figure: shrewd, yet humble and forgiving; believing in God, yet not practicing any religion; seeking advice, yet staying aloof and lonely. Morris observes that, superficially, “few men have come to the office of president of the United States less qualified for it than Abraham Lincoln.” Lincoln lacked national political experience (except for one term in the house of representatives); he lacked administrative experience, and had “never supervised a single employee;” he lacked military experience. Hindsight blins us to the fact that Lincoln was really a neophyte, and Mr. Morris draws an interesting contrast between Lincoln’s lack of experience in office and his potential.

The Lincoln Way is competently written, indexed, and profusely illustrated with color and black and white paintings, cartoons, maps, and photographs. Several minor quibbles: the illustrations, although captioned, do not provide full identification; illustrations from several famous paintings were cropped to their detriment. For example, on pages 105-106 the illustration is a painting captioned “General Ulysses S. Grant and his men.” This is Ole Peter Hansen Balling’s famous painting of Grant and his generals, who all sat for their portraits, and five of them on the extreme left hand side of the painting, including George Armstrong Custer, are cropped out. The publisher indicates this title is for grade five and up. However, I chose a page at random, analyzed it with my word processor, and found a readability of grade eight and up.

The FDR Way is very comparable to the Lincoln Way. The first six chapters take Roosevelt from his boyhood home of Hyde Park to his inauguration. Remaining chapters delve into his decision making. The six decisions chosen include: the first hundred days; fighting for social security; packing the supreme court; trading destroyers for bases; seeking a third term; and creating the United Nations. Again, as with the Lincoln title in this series, the author is generally laudatory, but does show Roosevelt making mistakes, particularly with respect to his attempt to pack the Supreme Court. Only an understated allusion is made to Roosevelt’s marital problems.


Born on October 14, 1884, in New York City, Eleanor was raised by a strict code: with money comes the responsibility to assist the poor. And that became her life’s mission, whether it was teaching exercise and dance to the girls in Lower East Side, at College Settlement, or visiting the miners in West Virginia. Lobbying for better conditions, or negotiating with Castro for the return of prisoners following the Bay of Pigs.
incident, or hammering out the structure for the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” which was adopted in 1948, Mrs. Roosevelt was always true to her calling. Eleanor Roosevelt was truly a fascinating woman, always topping the polls of the most influential people for the last forty years of her life.

The layout of the book itself is student-friendly. Included are a chronology, a list of places to visit, chapter Notes, further reading list and index. This format is similar to other volumes in the “People to Know” series. The author uses a no-nonsense, compact style, with emphasis on facts. The snippets of letters and photographs add a touch of humanity to the recounting of American history. However, the short paragraphs lend to a choppy style of writing.

If you could have only one resource on Washington that would appeal to all age levels, this is laid out well and offers a very solid sense of the state. The series contains such books on twenty states at this time, with more to come. The newest titles are Georgia and Michigan.

Quality - 5 § Acceptability - 5

Jannet Hoeffner
Freelance Writer
Prairie City, Oregon


The “Evergreen State” or “Chinook State” are only two of the many names that could be used to describe the diverse state of Washington. Known for salmon, apples, airplanes, and Mt. St. Helens, a short list and only a beginning, Washington State is a land of many contrasts. With natural pristine beauty and the artificial intelligence technology of a fast growing computer industry examples of her converse attractions.

A Historical Album of Washington is an overview of the state’s history, touching on every major event that influenced her and made her the place she is today. From the original inhabitants and early exploration of her vast resources, coming full circle to safeguarding those same resources, a distinct part of her uniqueness as the 42nd state.

Many of the facts are well known to anyone with a slight knowledge of the state, including the introduction of missionaries to the territory and the traumatic Whitman massacre that resulted from the clash of two distinct cultures. Washington’s involvement in the pipeline of supplies for the Alaska gold rush and her critical part in boat and airplane manufacturing during the 1st and 2nd world wars. But there are hidden among these great tragedies and triumphs many lesser known events in her past.

The photos, maps and drawings illustrate the varied aspects of the people, places and events to enhance the text. In the back of the book a glossary type section offers quick facts, statistical information, places, and a key events timeline. There is even a listing of well known personalities that have come from Washington.
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