The Fall Book Review
Thursday, November 14, 2013

Presented by the Library Science and Instructional Technology Department
Fall Book Review

Book lovers – including librarians, professors, teachers, and students – convene for the biannual Book Review Session, in spring and fall, hosted by the Department of Library Science and Instructional Technology at Kutztown University. These energetic gatherings culminate in a selection of books to be reviewed by the attendees. The result of this process is the collection of reviews you hold in your hands.

To the publishers who generously contribute books, year after year, and the reviewers on the following pages...

Thank you for your time and effort!
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<tr>
<td>You Can Do It!</td>
<td>Lewin, Betsy</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zombie Makers: True Stories of Nature’s Undead</td>
<td>Johnson, Rebecca L.</td>
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All Books are Alphabetized by Author’s Last Name

FALL
**Millions, Billions, & Trillions**

This book helps students visualize large numbers in the millions, billions and trillions. Adler uses many food comparisons which are featured in very appealing illustrations to bring reality to such large quantities. This book will rarely stay on the shelf as it will appeal to both students and teachers. Recommended.

Non-Fiction

*Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School*

**Starring Jules As Herself**

When seven-year-old Jules sings her Fizzy Ice Cream Cone song at a local diner, a casting director, Colby Kingston, asks her to audition for a mouthwash commercial! Now Jules has to deal with the fact that the commercial is for orange mouthwash (and she HATES orange flavored things), she’s afraid she’ll throw up during the audition, she wants the new girl at her school to be her new best friend, and she’s in a big fight with her ex-best friend Charlotte. Sure, on the outside this book looks like a story about a growing young actress on her rise to fame, but really it’s about friendship and whether you should save old ones, or make new ones.

Coming of Age, Chapter Book

*Shelby Foster, Student, Kutztown University*

**Healthy Kids**

This encouraging and educational book features photographs from kids all around the world, from forty-one countries in six continents. Each page has a simple, kid-friendly statement describing the things healthy kids all over the earth do, like eat good food, drink clean water, wash hands, brush teeth, exercise and protect themselves. The book includes a forward by Melinda French Gates, co-chair and trustee of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It ends with a more detailed description, in second person, of what it means to be a healthy kid, for a parent or adult to read to a young child. This portion of the book also ends with a couple paragraphs on “What Else Can You Do?” *Healthy Kids* would be a great book to share with students or children to expose them to various cultures and ways of doing things because it helps normalize practices that are not common here in the United States. The book shows children eating on the floor, in Vietnam; a woman breastfeeding in public, in Cuba; a girl gathering water by bucket, with a small child on her back, in Ghana; a boy under a mosquito net, in Nigeria, and various types of toilets and weather conditions. This book would be a great addition to an elementary classroom library that includes nonfiction and health-related texts.

Picture Book; Nonfiction

*Emily L. Hershey, Academic Coach, Agora Cyber Charter School*
In Search of Goliathus Hercules

In Search of Goliathus Hercules, by Jennifer Angus, is an extremely unique tale about a young boy named Henri Bell. Henri is sent to live in an ancient house, with his strange Great Aunt Georgie, whose main hobby is collecting intriguing buttons. Henri’s mother went to search for his father, who disappeared three years ago after going on a business trip to Malaya. Soon Henri’s perspective changes when he discovers his newfound ability to communicate with insects and becomes a trainer in a travelling circus act. Filled with unexpected twists and turns, the plot tells the fantastic fantasy tale of a boy meeting mysterious characters including numerous fascinating insects and villains in disguise. Henri is taken on an adventure to search for his lost father and to capture a massive insect, known as Goliathus Hercules, before someone else does. Fans of The Spiderwick Chronicles will especially enjoy the unique talking creatures and the exposure of hidden family secrets in this story.

Chapter Book; Fantasy

Melanie Stuhr, Student, Kutztown University

Scholastic Discover More Series

Clear, bright pictures against white backgrounds, large fonts, and just one or two facts per page, send the message that this informational series is for the very young. According to branding on the back of the books, this series is targeted to emergent readers. It should be noted that putting a sentence in a really large font does not make it easier to read. That being stated, the books are very visually engaging and do have some good basic information for preschoolers who have an adult on hand to do the reading. See Me Grow and My Body have the most information that is likely to be new to the target audience. See Me Grow has the best design; the photos are clear and easy to track in a logical progression. While Dinosaurs is part of the “Discover More” series, it is clearly written for an older, more sophisticated audience. Dinosaurs shares some features with its easier-to-read cousins: excellent photos, a dynamic layout, and detailed captions which make up the bulk of the text. Each title has a code in the front that can be used to access a digital text that is intended to supplement the print title. The digital texts have the same visual appeal as the print texts, and include videos and audio tracks. Though not detailed enough to be useful as research sources, the titles in this series have great visual appeal and will likely be popular with students who enjoy browsing informational books.

Nonfiction

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster
**Scholastic Discover More: Planets**


Which planet has 63 moons? Which one has storms the size of Earth that swirl around at speeds of 1,240 mph? How do rockets get off of the ground, and how fast can they go? All of these answers and more can be found in this book, which are presented in fun and interesting ways. This book has a guide in the beginning that shows the reader how to navigate through the pages. Each page has amazing pictures that will capture the attention of its readers. One will find information on planets, stars, rockets, the solar system, and more! A glossary and index can be found in the back that the reader can reference when needed. There is a website and code located in the book which the students can access and it includes more information along with quizzes. This is a great nonfiction book that will excite students and pique their interest with lots of fun facts.

*Nonfiction*  
Andrea Siegfried

**Scholastic Discover More: Rainforest**


This book is filled with real-life photographs of all types of animals, plants, and people who live in the rainforest. The text is written in a clear and concise manner so that it is accessible to various students at different stages in the reading process. The book begins with an introduction of the rainforest and what a rainforest is. It is divided into different topics of the rainforest and then subdivided into sections focusing on specific animals, plants, and tribes. There is plenty of information and pictures included in this book. The formatting may be confusing for students because of the random text throughout the page and the numerous captions for pictures throughout the book. If using this book in the classroom, students may benefit from a lesson on how to read this type of nonfiction book so that they do not become confused by the random text structure. An in-depth look at the animals and plants provides adequate information about the rainforest. One unique part of this book is how the authors explain how the rainforests affect everyone. This helps readers see the importance of the rainforests. The table of contents, glossary, and index are also helpful features included in this book.

*Picture Book, Nonfiction*  
Tiffany Yehl, 5th grade teacher, PA Leadership Charter School

**Dirty Gert**


Arnold has done it again and has written and illustrated a hit story full of humor and dirt. Gert loves to play and eat dirt with worms and doesn’t change for anyone including family, friends, and neighbors. Then one day it rains and Gert sprouts roots and leaves. The local news, lawyers, zoologists, botanists, doctors, and Hollywood can’t get enough of this Gert tree. Gert’s parents save the day and chase away all those fame and fortune finders. At the end of the story Gert’s family finally accepts her so Gert comes in for dinner with her leaves and roots. Some of the vocabulary would be difficult for the target age group but the rhyming words and Arnold’s funny illustrations paired with a great story make this an excellent addition to any elementary or public library. This book is perfect for a read aloud and would spring discussions on dirt, plants, and Earth Day. Also, this book was a great addition to the Dig into Reading Summer Reading public library theme.

*Picture Book*  
Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library
**Fifty Cents and a Dream: Young Booker T. Washington**


The reader travels back in time to explore the motivation of a slave boy who dreamed of unlocking the mysteries of the written word. Gently describing struggles along the way, Booker T. Washington carries his master’s daughters’ books to school. Staring into the classroom where only the master’s daughter is allowed to enter, Booker looks longingly at the opportunity denied to him. As he grows older working in the salt furnace and coalmine, the hope of learning to read continues to fuel his life. The gift of a spelling book gives birth to the beginning of his formal learning. Examining the diminished access to education provides the reader with a fresh perspective on the value of reading. Booker’s constant drive propels the story forward until he finally arrives at college with nothing more than 50 cents, a dream, and a willingness to do whatever it takes to complete his education. There are other books about Booker T. Washington, but none that capture the child’s perspective with a drive to excel. The timeline in the back of the text is mandatory for helping the reader understand the larger story of Booker T. Washington’s adult life. Illustrations enhance the text and help the reader visualize story events that provide a hopeful perspective throughout the story. The negative events serve to portray hope for Booker but also for society as the reader is subtly encouraged to re-establish a love of learning.

**Picture Book; Nonfiction**

*Nancy E. Cardenuto, Asst. Prof., Kutztown University*

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**The Market Bowl**


Every morning was the same for Yoyo- Wake up, make bitterleaf stew for market, eat breakfast, and sell the stew. But she didn’t understand why it took so long to make the stew! She could do it just as good as Mama Cecile and get to market faster. But she didn’t follow the recipe Mama Cecile sang every morning. So when it was her turn to sit on the Market Stool and sell her stew, it didn’t go as Yoyo had thought. This surprising tale of diligence and tradition will put a tear in every reader’s eye as they think about right and wrong.

**Picture Book**

*Kaitlyn Verdon, Student, Kutztown University*

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**Hold Fast**


This tale about a close family of four struggling to get through a Chicago winter sheds light on the shocking number of homeless families currently living there. When Dash, the father, supplements his income as a library aide by cataloguing old estate books, he gets tangled up with dangerous criminals who kidnap him. The mystery and worry of Dash’s disappearance is all-too-realistic. The title, *Hold Fast*, is a recurring theme throughout the book; dad’s mantra to his family is that they should hold fast to their dreams and to each other. Early Pearl is an inspiring young character, and the fact that she has been thrown into dire circumstances might help young readers understand how people might become homeless through no fault of their own. While she puts herself in dangerous situations, her curiosity and sense of purpose are typical of her age group. The book breaks down the vocabulary, which is an advantage for struggling readers. This is a timely representation of the financial and moral struggles of many American families today. With this novel, Blue Balliett has lived up to her reputation as a bestselling author.

**Realistic Fiction**

*Marge McCormick, Tamaqua Area Middle School*
Nobody

Nobodies are never seen or heard and this is why they make the perfect assassins. *Nobody* by Jennifer Barnes is about loneliness, coming to terms with one’s self, and acceptance. Seventeen year old Nix is a nobody who is ignored, shunned, and easily forgotten and this is what makes him the perfect assassin. He was raised by the society, a place that raised him as a killer. He kills without question and has a perfect track record until he is assigned to kill Claire. Nix soon finds out that Claire is just like him, a nobody. Once Claire figures out what she is, all those times she was forgotten at the park or the mall by her parents she finally understands why. Once Nix defies the society by not killing Claire the society realizes that these two nobodies are too dangerous to keep alive. This book would be great for young adults who feel like they don’t belong. With having the different point of views from Nix and Claire this lets the reader feel what both characters are feeling and connect to both the characters emotionally.

Chapter book; Fantasy Romance

Crystal Hunsicker, Kutztown University

Dear America: Down the Rabbit Hole, The Diary of Pringle Rose

When fourteen-year-old Pringle Rose’s parents die in a carriage accident, Pringle has no choice but to escape with her brother, Gideon, from their Uncle Edward and Aunt Adeline. The siblings take a train from Scranton, Pennsylvania to Chicago. On their journey, Pringle meets a young mother whose children never seem to tire of games and two older women who are quick to judge the people they see, including Gideon. Pringle stands up for her brother who has hidden the family cat Mozie in his bag. Once in Chicago, Pringle and Gideon find themselves seeking refuge from the young mother on the train and her husband. As the Great Fire of Chicago spreads, Pringle discovers the mystery behind her parents’ accident. Bartoletti always does research for her stories and this book is full of historical information about the coal miners’ strike in Scranton during 1871 and the Great Fire. Bartoletti has also addressed how children with disabilities were treated during this time by creating Gideon has a young brother with Down syndrome. This book would work as a supplemental reading for students learning about the late 1800s and the status of women during this time. Both public and school libraries can add this book to their collections.

Historical Fiction

Jessica Serrenti, Student, Kutztown University

Out on the Prairie

This wonderful children’s story is an excellent way for children to help children with learning to count. The author goes through the various animals found on the prairie and explains what they are doing from jumping to rolling around. Not only does she do that, but she also counts starting from one and going on to ten. After the counting, there are numerous pages with lots of useful and interesting information on the various plants and animals found on the prairie. The very detailed and colorful illustrations draw the reader in to and create an elaborate imagine in one’s mind of the prairie in which the author is talking about. Also, the illustrations present the opportunity for parents to count out loud so that the child can learn how to count or the child could practice their counting skills by counting the animals in the pictures. The information located in the back seems very accurate and allows the reader to get further educated. Overall, this counting story is very adorable and heartwarming and is sure to be loved by children and adults.

Nonfiction

Hannah Miller, Staff, Tamaqua Public Library
America the Beautiful: Together We Stand

The song, “America the Beautiful”, sets the foundation of national pride in this uplifting picture book. A variety of artists depict various aspects of life in the United States in positive themes accompanied by presidential quotes. The words of Presidents Carter, Jefferson, Reagan, Lincoln, Obama, Kennedy, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Bush, and Washington ring loudly as the reader’s eye gets lost in the unique artistic styles of well-known children’s book illustrators. The inspirational text draws on all that is good about the nation’s vision: unity through diversity, community action, and hope for the future. The text includes illustrations and explanations of national landmarks and symbols. Although there are many books with patriotic themes, this book inspires hope for the future. Teachers could use this as a read aloud, or sing along, but keeping a dry eye until the end of the book might serve to be quite a challenge. In the dark days our nation has recently endured, it is refreshing to read a children’s book that can breathe a touch of hope into the next generation.

Picture Book
Nancy E. Cardenuto, Asst. Prof., Kutztown University

On a Beam of Light: A Story of Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein’s influence on our world is as big as his never-ending thirst for information. Berne’s book is a great way to introduce young students to this amazing thinker/researcher/scientist. Readers will get a quick summary of the important events in Einstein’s life and come to realize how valuable curiosity and imagination are to problem solving. The readers will also learn how Einstein himself struggled as a student, possibly offering encouragement to struggling students who dream of success but struggle in traditional classrooms. Radunsky’s artwork is sketchy, colorful, and charming, but the textured-look of the page made it difficult to read the text at times. Readers with a vision impairment might find it particularly difficult to read the text. Overall, the book is a nice introduction to an important historical figure. I recommend this book as an added purchase for public and school libraries.

Picture Book
Karen J. Wanamaker, Outreach Librarian, Kutztown University of Pa.

The Lifeguard
The lifeguard by Deborah Blumenthal is about new beginnings, romance, and finding the strength to accept what is happening. While Sirena Shane’s parents were going through the divorce process she moves into her aunt’s house in Rohde Island for the summer. During her time at her aunt’s house she meets Pilot, a mysterious guy who works as a lifeguard at the ocean. After meeting Pilot her eyes were opened to a world where shamans, ghosts and supernatural beings exist. This book would be great for a student whose parents are going through a divorce or a rough patch. The detailed emotions Sirena goes through about her parents’ divorce will connect to these students. This book would be great for both classroom and public libraries so it could be accessible to every young adult.

Chapter Book; Fantasy
Crystal Hunsicker, Kutztown University
**Dear America: A City Tossed and Broken, The Diary of Minnie Bonner**


Fourteen-year-old Minnie Bonner is forced to move to San Francisco as a maid to the wealthy Sump family after her parents lost the tavern they owned in Philadelphia. While her mother blames her father for disappearing and leaving them with nothing, Minnie blames her mother for allowing Minnie to be taken away by the cruel Mrs. Sump. Minnie relies on her skills from working in the tavern to help her learn how to be a proper maid. But Minnie soon realizes that no amount of lessons will make Mrs. Sump happy. When an earthquake and fire in San Francisco threaten and take the lives of the city’s people, Minnie starts to question her role and identity in this unfamiliar city. To some people, she is called Philly, to others, she is known as someone else. Minnie struggles to find peace with who she is as she discovers the reason behind how her parents lost their tavern. This book can be used as a supplement to students learning about the progression and set-backs America faced during the early 1900s. Blundell has created a role model for girls when facing hardships in their own lives. This book can be used in both school and public libraries.

*Historical Fiction*

Jessica Serrenti, Student, Kutztown University

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**The Worst-Case Scenario: Deadly Seas**


*The Worst-case Scenario* series is a collection of choose-your-own-story styled books. What this means is that throughout the book readers are given certain choices to make that direct them to different pages based on which choice is taken. This entry into the series places the reader on a nautical journey around the world with a crew of several other people, their goal is to get around the world in a certain amount of days without losing any crew members. During the journey the reader will make the decisions that decide if the goal is met or if the crew fails. Endings aside from the true ending tend to be abrupt as the win conditions are made impossible, often through the death of a crewmate or oneself, and a game over tells the reader that that path is over. Each crew-member is a specialist in some aspect of boating and provides different views on what action should be taken at decision points. All the characters are in their teens including the otherwise non-descript view-point character. At the beginning and end of the books there is information that proves necessary to succeed such as crew bios, knot types and boat terminology. The book emphasizes basic boating safety and types of aquatic life which would make it useful in lessons about the ocean. The book is enjoyable, especially for readers that enjoy games like the *Mass Effect* series that allow the player to decide how the story plays out.

*Adventure*

Joseph Wenzel, Student, Kutztown University
Go For The Goal!
Grade Level: 3-5.
Josh rushed home with his best friend Aiden to check the computer. He anxiously checked a website to see if he and Aiden made the United soccer team, they did! Josh soon finds out that being on the most popular soccer league is not what he expected. Everyone on the team is a star player but their team stinks. They just don’t play as a team. Josh remembers how well his previous team, the Flames, played together. They played as a team and there were no star athletes. In Mrs. Littleword’s eight grade social studies class Josh asked his teacher if he could do his research project on the World Cup. His teacher told him an interesting story about the 1999 United States women’s soccer team. They weren’t playing as a team and their coach decided to use team building exercises to help bring their team together. This gives Josh an idea. Could these team building exercises help his team play better? This is an excellent story of how important it is to work together. Students can relate to how working as a team creates a winning team no matter if it is in sports or a group project for school. This book conveys a positive message that would be a worthy addition to any library.

Chapter Book
Melinda Bender, Librarian, Thirteenth and Green Elementary School

Inside Outside
The illustrations by Lizi Boyd in Inside Outside, are unlike any other. Each page has cut out sections revealing what is on the next page. A vase of flowers on a desk on one page is a bunch of flowers in the garden on the next. The pages not only alternate from inside and outside but also alternate between seasons, rooms, and animals. One page is of a child painting inside and another is the child playing in the snow outside. The illustrations are not only bright, detailed, and especially unique, but they are painted in gouache on kraft paper, which is one of the best things about this book. At first the book with only illustrations appears very simple but the simplicity and the lack of plot of this book creates the opportunity to create a story. Using only illustrations to read the book, the student can create their own story using a variety of language skills. Inside Outside would be great to include in a lesson with English Language Learners for teachers or Librarians.

Picture Book
Melanie Stuhr, Student, Kutztown University

Devine Intervention
This story is not your typical guardian angel novel where the angel travels long lengths of time to save the girl whom he loves; far from it. Jerome Hancock is a guardian angel in training. He is in a soup-rehabilitation program that he is about to get kicked out of for breaking too many of the Ten Commandments. The reader is introduced to Heidi who hears Jerome in her head. He sings to her and annoys her in many ways, but when Heidi’s soul is in danger Jerome and Heidi must join forces to save her soul. Heidi soon realizes that she is not crazy and the voice inside her head is real. Young adults can connect to these easily lovable characters as they figure out what they want to get out of their lives. This book would be great for both classroom and public libraries.

Chapter book; Fantasy
Crystal Hunsicker; Kutztown University
The Universe of Fair
All eleven-and-a-half-year-old Miller wants to do is enjoy the annual town fair on his own with his best friend. Miller has been trying to be super nice to his annoying little sister, Penny, to show his parents that he’s respectable and responsible enough to be on his own more. But when Miller’s mom can’t take her volunteer hours at the fair, his dad has to take over instead. It turns out that Miller won’t be on his own for the fair after all. With Miller’s little sister and some other annoying first graders in tow, a mishap with his dad’s lemon merengue pie, some flying death heads, and other crazy adventures, *The Universe of Fair* sure is a winner! This book had me giggling. I love Bulion’s writing style about a small town fair, and the added pictures of Dormer make it all the more hilarious.

Disasters: A Close-up Look at Nature’s Biggest Disasters
As one of the titles in the *Scholastic Discover More* series, *Disasters* depicts disastrous weather, unstable earth, troubled waters, how people cause disasters, and threats from space. Rich color illustrations and photographs bring reality to the reader. The outstanding visuals include graphs, cross-sections, and timelines. Factual, anecdotal text complements the visuals. As this is not an in-depth treatment of the topics additional resources are included on some pages with links to websites. Readers will become engrossed with the high interest presentation of subjects such as killer cold, weather tech and scientists, landslides, volcanoes, and tsunamis to mention a few. Burnie brings science to life in these explorations. A glossary and index aid in research. Students will definitely enjoy browsing and getting lost through the pages. An added attraction to this title is a link to a downloadable free digital companion book, *Storm Chasers and Other Disaster Heroes*. Highly recommended for students and adults.

Sharks
Do you know that there is a new species of shark discovered approximately every two weeks? That is just one of the amazing facts you will read in this beautifully illustrated book. This book is part of Scholastic’s *Discover More* series which includes books on planets, reptiles, farms, and many more. Many of the illustrations fill up the background of the page leaving more room for facts of which there are plenty. Some of the topics in the book include what sharks are, different types of sharks, and how you can do your part to help protect endangered sharks. I really like that it includes a “free digital book” which is a 50 page PDF file filled with pictures and information about people who work with sharks. For such a relatively low price, this book and the companion PDF are filled with information. The book is also semi-hardcover which makes it a great purchase for a library because of its durability. I would recommend this book for any elementary level science teacher looking for books on sharks. I would also recommend any of the other books in the series as well. This is another great non-fiction title from Scholastic.
Can You Growl Like a Bear?


This sweet book is written with rhymes and introduces different sounds made by a variety of animals including dolphins, bees, wolves, cockatoos, and frogs. Each page asks the readers if they can make the same sound as the animal, which will keep children engaged and entertained. The soft but realistic illustrations are pleasing and make even the bee look cuddly. The book is meant as a bedtime story as the last page shows all the animals sleeping and reads: “Everyone is quiet now. You can’t hear a peep. It’s time to gently close your eyes and fall fast asleep.” Recommended.

Board Book

Amber Sams, Librarian, Saucon Valley High School

Grassland


Grasslands have different names in different parts of the world and in each of these different grassland ecosystems live different animals. Callery attempts to address the different ecosystems in this title. The introductory page presents a map of the world with all grassland areas highlighted in yellow. The names for different grasslands are introduced, but only some of the highlighted areas on the map are labeled. While five different types of grasslands are listed, only three are addressed in the later pages of the book: savannah, pampas and prairie. The first page about each ecosystem starts with a double spread about a particular plant-eating animal. Details about the animal include a brief lifecycle and random facts. One of the animal’s predators is then introduced in the lower right hand corner, encouraging a page turn. What follows is a double page spread about the predator. Each ecosystem has three or four animals highlighted in this manner. When the text moves on to animals in a different ecosystem, there is very little to indicate the change. The prairie ecosystem ends with a diagram of a food web, but the two other highlighted ecosystems do not have a food web in the text. Backmatter includes an index and glossary. This is an inconsistent text that is hard to follow. While the title may appeal to casual browsers who enjoy reading about animals, none of the topics are treated in a way that makes the text useful for research. Those looking for information about ecosystems and food chains will find richer information in Bobbie Kalman’s “Food Chains” series.

Nonfiction

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster

Revolutionary Friends: General Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette


In July of 1777, the Marquis De Lafayette is about to meet his hero George Washington and help the Patriots in the war against the British. While there is no money to pay Lafayette to command part of the army, Washington honors him by considering him a son and a friend. During the Battle of Brandywine, Lafayette is shot in the leg and Washington tells the doctor to treat him like a son. This book is very well done. There are small journal or letter boxes on some of the pages with quotes from Lafayette. The back of the book has additional information about their friendship, timelines about each man’s life, places to visit, and a bibliography. The illustrator did a fine job depicting these men and those around them. This is a good source book if one teaches The Revolutionary War.

Picture Book: Historical Fiction

Gwenn Davis, Librarian, Stroudsburg Jr. High School
Vivaldi’s Four Seasons
This book is part of Celenza’s composer series. Antonio Vivaldi is a well-liked teacher and composer at a girls’ orphanage, the Pietà, in Venice, Italy. After he gets sent away by the orphanage director, Vivaldi goes to Mantua for a fresh start. While Vivaldi is successful in his new town, he still misses the girls at the Pietà and continues to write music for them based on the seasons in his beloved Venice. When the governors at the orphanage realize their mistake in firing Vivaldi, he is hired back to write specially commissioned works. Vivaldi sends his seasonally-inspired pieces to the girls, which turn out to be his Four Seasons concerto. Vivaldi returns to Venice for the well-received inaugural performance. The illustrations are flat and give a painting-like quality. This suggests a moment in time captured by a painter and hanging in a museum.
This reviewer’s copy of the book did not come with a CD; however, the cover advertises that the book does include a recording. The sonnets are not always taught in conjunction with learning about the Four Seasons concerto, so having the text in the back of the book gives the reader an idea of the images Vivaldi intended to portray as the listener hears the music. The governors hiring back Vivaldi was a little abrupt; it would have been nice to see a reason for their changed minds.
While the exact date that The Four Seasons and accompanying sonnets were written is unknown (as noted in the Author’s Note), Celenza writes a plausible tale of the work’s origins and inspiration. This book would be a welcome addition to any elementary music teacher’s classroom library. The story is easy to follow and interesting for the reader.

Picture Book
Carrie T. Kreider, Graduate, Kutztown University

A Secret Keeps
A small child packs up for a trip to his grandparents. Before leaving his grandpa calls to tell his grandson that a secret is waiting for him. When the family arrives at the grandparents’ farm the child begins searching for the secret. He questions the farm animals one by one but no one gives him a clue to what the secret is. The pictures to this story are created with soft water color paints that give the reader a feel of a soft glowing dream. If you careful search the pictures you can find little snippets of real photographs hidden within the pictures. The story takes place in a rural setting with plenty of farm animals for a young student to identify. The theme of the story is secrets and having patience. The entire story is shown and told through a child’s eyes eager to find something special. This is a very special book that evokes the love between a grandchild and a grandparent. This is a book that many young readers will enjoy.

Picture Book
Melinda Bender, Librarian, Thirteenth and Green Elementary School
Return to Me

Self-perception and how others are perceived, adaptation to changing family dynamics, adjustment to both physical and psychological (role) shifts, and the cultivation of a long-distance boy-girl relationship are the predominant themes of this realistic fictional story told in first-person narrative by Rebecca Muir, the book’s protagonist. Covering a time span of just three months, from high school graduation until two days after Labor Day, “Reb,” who wanted to go to Columbia University to become an architect, reconstructs her internal vision, her future plans, and her relationship with parents, grandparents, brother, friends, and boyfriend. The family moves from Puget Sound, Washington to New York City suburbia in New Jersey and eventually, back to their original home in Washington state, after Reb’s dad’s infidelity comes to light and he announces he wants a divorce. But Reb, her mother, and brother find help and healing from Reb’s maternal grandfather on the island of Hawaii, where he has made a home and business for himself through life transformations of his own. Reb deals with realistic confusion and conflict, typical of an eighteen-year-old, both personally and career-path wise. What was not entirely realistic was the element of parapsychology threaded throughout the storyline; Reb has inherited the female-linked trait of having the ability to sense the future. This novel’s value lies in its thought-provoking layout, where each of the four parts and the epilogue start with a quote by a famous architect that provides the sturdy framework for the ensuing chapters. The book’s strength lies in illustrating how adversity creates an environment where one can grow as a person yet remain true to their nature.

Realism

Gayle R. Heath, Library Director, Tamaqua Public Library

A Dollar, a Penny, How Much and How Many?

Cleary has a knack for taking difficult concepts for young children and presenting them in ways that bring joy and clarification. Through rhyming, Cleary introduces money and explains dollars and coins, how much a coin is worth, and that society exchanges money for items. When explaining how many pennies are in a nickel, dime, and quarter, he not only writes how many are in each, but there is also an illustration showing how many pennies are in each. He takes the reader through the different combinations one can make for the same price (i.e. 10 nickels, 1 dollar, and 4 quarters all equal the same amount). This would be a great book to introduce money and a book that should stay in the classroom to be used as a reference for students. The last two pages would especially be a great tool; it shows both the front and back of coins and bills and says how much each is worth. This book will make a boring topic to some more interesting and easier to understand!

Picture Book

Andrea Siegfried
Dolphin, Fox, Hippo, and Ox: What Is a Mammal?

Cleary uses rhyming and entertainingly goofy pictures to explain what a mammal is to young readers. This picture book describes the characteristics through charming rhymes. The font is in black except for the names of mammals, which are in different colors. This makes them stand out and the reader knows when a mammal is being mentioned. The illustrations speak with the words, and will help the readers’ comprehension of the story whether reading it themselves or through a read aloud. At the end of the picture book, Cleary has lists of the characteristics of mammals that he talked about throughout the book. He condenses it on the last two pages, making a list for readers to reference. This is a book that readers will like to hear over and over, which will help them master what mammals are along with furthering their knowledge on rhyming. This is a great informational piece that will engage our young readers.

Picture Book

Andrea Siegfried

Tortoise, Tree Snake, Gator, and Sea Snake: What Is a Reptile?

What is a reptile? Reptiles have dry, scaly skin and lungs to breathe air. They are also cold-blooded animals that have backbones. These characteristics along with many more are written in rhyming sentences throughout the book. Different reptiles are named along with characteristics of those animals. At the end of the book is a quick summary that explains what a reptile is in a bulleted list of everything that was discussed in the book. The illustrations included are comical and colorful, which adds attraction and interest to the text. This book is great for a younger audience and can be used as a read aloud or an independent read. There is just enough information for younger readers to learn new facts about reptiles. Although the pictures are not realistic, it adds interest and comical appeal for the younger reads. This book is part of a series, *Animal Groups Are Categorical*, by Cleary. This series would be a wonderful addition for students wanting to learn about different groups of animals, as well as for beginning research for young readers.

Picture Book

Tiffany Yehl, 5th grade teacher, PA Leadership Charter School
The Book Boat’s In


Jesse King loves to read but he is only able to get books from his teacher (all of which he has already read) and from Mr. Edwards’s Library and Bookstore canal boat. While in the bookstore, Jesse finds a copy of *Swiss Family Robinson* which is his favorite book. Jesse wants to buy the book, but he doesn’t have enough money. His father suggests that he earns some money around the town. When Jesse gets home he counts the money he has saved which is only thirteen cents and he needs twenty cents. During the little free time Jesse has, he finds some odd jobs to do including sweeping the floor and cleaning windows at the general store, cleaning harnesses at the stable, chopping wood at the tavern, and running errands for the doctor. Jesse is worried because he only saved seventeen and half cents. When he goes to the bookstore he is devastated because he cannot find the book. Mr. Edwards reveals to Jesse that he had sold the twenty cent book but had traded to get another worn copy that was only fourteen cents. Jesse was able to buy the book he worked so hard to save for. Despite the illustrations not being the best attempt at 1800’s folk art painting because they have a child like quality to them, the book tells a good story. Having been to Lockport, New York to see the Erie Canal where the story takes place, the reviewer would recommend this story about a bookstore canal boat because it brings history alive. At the end of the book is an author’s note about the history of book canal boats. Teachers could use this story in a history or math class and have students add and subtract how much money Jesse saves.

Picture Book

Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library

Pigmares


Have you ever read Frankenstein and wondered what it would be like if Frankenstein’s monster was actually a hog? Well lucky for you there is a book for you. *Pigmares* twists all the old classics into poems where the main characters are replaced with pigs. No more Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde it’s now Dr. Hogwell and Mr. Pig. This book will have you chuckling about all the piggy puns mixed with the monster theme. This book is perfect when introducing poetry to elementary school kids. The theme will make it fun for kids to read and break down the poems. The theme is also great for the Halloween season and encouraging kids to think creatively by twisting stories that they are familiar with and adding a spin to them like the author of this book Doug Cushman did with pigs.

Poetry

Brittany Lee, Student, Kutztown University
Monet Paints a Day

Told from Monet’s point of view this nonfiction book is told in a story format. The story begins with Monet writing a letter to his fiancée, Alice. The book only focuses on one part of Monet’s life at Etretat, France. He paints the sea, the beach, and the Manneporte stone arch in quick bright strokes to give the impression and feeling of the location in his painting, *Waves at the Manneporte*, which is at the end of the book. Claude was known for painting the same scene over and over but at different times of the day. Monet is so focused on his painting that he does not realize the waves are coming towards him and crash over him, his painting, and supplies. He is underwater for some time and is finally washed ashore. Monet blames himself because he didn’t pay attention to the times of the tides. Claude goes to his hotel room to dry off and rest but is determined to go back the next day to paint. On each page there is a box of facts about Monet. At the end of the book there is an author’s note with a short explanation of impressionism and Monet’s painting techniques along with a short bibliography. The author wanted to capture an impression of Monet’s life. Beginning from the cover of the book the colorful illustrations draw the reader in to find out more about Claude Monet. The illustrations are done in watercolors to look like the impressionist’s work even though Monet painted with oil paints. This is a great introduction to Monet and the book does not read like a nonfiction book. Students could read this book for pleasure or as a source for a report on Monet.

Nonfiction

Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library

Return of the Library Dragon

Miss Lotty, the beloved librarian, at Sunrise Elementary School is getting ready to retire. But when a guy who says he’s IT arrives, her dragon-like personality re-appears. Mike Krochip is bringing Media World to the new Sunrise Cybrary. Lotta Scales is back, and she is smoking mad. She threatens to melt the motherboard if books are not brought back to the library. She eats a laptop and a white board and eight printers and 65 tablets. Children must help save the library and bring Miss Lotty back from her alternate personality. Molly Brickmeyer, the new librarian saves the day by bringing back books and promises to give the kids a library where they can unplug for the love of books.

White’s oversized watercolors must be “read” from the end papers to the back cover as they are filled with puns. Readers are pictured with books such as *The Pokey Little Guppy* and *Charlotte Surfs the Web*. Quotes fill the end papers: “Google can bring you back 100,000 answers; a librarian can bring you back the right one.” – Neil Gaiman. This is a must for every librarian who worries about the beloved books being replaced by computers. Elementary students also will enjoy the humor in this sequel to *The Library Dragon*.

Children’s, Picture Book

Eloise Long, Professor of Library Science, Kutztown University
The Cats of Tanglewood Forest

12-year-old Lillian Kindred ends up being saved from trouble by being turned into a kitten by the cats of the Tanglewood Forest. Lillian is returned to her human form when she seeks out Old Mother Possum. But, she didn’t consider what will happen to her aunt as the result of her wish. To fix the mistake she made, Lillian ventures to the magical lands to try to make things right. Colorful, nature-theme illustrations are displayed throughout the book. This fantasy story should please any young reader and make for good read-aloud.

Chapter Book; Fantasy

Nikki Rodolico, Page, Horsham Township Library

A Marked Man: The Assassination of Malcolm X

The controversial nature of Malcolm X’s involvement in the Civil Rights Movement created an absence of his voice in the current teaching of history in schools. Yet, many during this troubled time heeded Malcolm X’s powerful words. The text provides background information about Malcolm’s early years and his eventual rise to become one of the strongest and needed voices in the Civil Rights Movement. Written sequentially, the reader gains a basic understanding of Malcolm’s life as it builds to the controversies that led to his eventual assassination. The text critically compares Malcolm X’s views to the message of Martin Luther King, Jr. and notes why even the Nation of Islam worked to silence his voice. Conspiracy theories about his assignation are explained as well as events from the actual trial of the three men accused and convicted of Malcolm’s assassination. Although the events of Malcolm’s life are complex, the text highlights facts that help middle level learners grasp a foundational understanding surrounding this powerful historical figure. Photographs and captions are carefully placed to aid the reader to better understand the text. Containing eighty-eight pages, the book provides enough detail to encourage young adults to continue their study on the life of Malcolm X. Doeden’s valuable book adds to the growing literature that gives light to the complex perspectives that continue to drive society toward greater understanding of diverse groups.

Nonfiction

Nancy E. Cardenuto, Asst. Prof., Kutztown University

Health Smarts

This title is one of the USA Today Teen Wise Guides Lifestyle Choices series. Other titles in the series include *Communication Smarts, Safety Smarts, and Volunteering Smarts*. Many short articles comprise each chapter on topics such as diet, the human body, fitness, substances and emotional health. This is full of relevant topics to help teens make positive choices.

Non-Fiction

Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School
All the Awake Animals are Almost Asleep

Need a new alphabet book that is fresh and informational? This alphabet book will meet your needs with its alliteration, information on animals, beautiful illustrations, and, of course, the ABC’s. The story starts off with a mother putting her child to bed, and the child saying he is not sleepy. The mother tells him that every creature has day and night, and that they all fall asleep. The story then goes on to show all of the sleepy animals, from A to Z. There is a letter printed on each page that corresponds to the animal, and it is usually interacting with the animal. This, along with the beautiful illustrations, makes the reader anxious to turn the page and continue on with the story. The words and illustrations correspond with one another, and both show the habitat of the animal along with some characteristics. Using this book as a mentor text, teachers can have their students draw the alphabet and make their letters look like animals, have the students use alliteration, and so on! This is definitely a book to read to your student more than once.

Picture Book
Andrea Siegfried

Notes from Ghost Town

What do you do when you have your whole summer planned out with your best friend only to find out that he is dead, and your schizophrenic mother confesses to the murder and is institutionalized? Olivia can’t believe that her mother is guilty of killing her daughter’s friend and a prodigy piano student of hers, so she sets out to solve the murder. Olivia begins to wonder about her own mental health when the person who is trying to help her solve Stern’s death, is Stern. There are many good twists and turns to the plot and when Olivia must find the killer before her mother’s court sentencing, the pages begin to fly in order to find “who dunnit”.

Chapter Book: Mystery
Gwenn Davis, Librarian, Stroudsburg Jr. High School

Rabbit and the Not-So-Big-Bad-Wolf

Rabbit and the Not-So- Big-Bad-Wolf is a simple picture book targeting children in Pre-K to 1st grade. It was originally written in French and translated into English. The story follows a bunny that is having a conversation with an unseen narrator asking him if he had seen the Not-So-Big-Bad-Wolf. The bunny proceeds to draw what he thinks the wolf looks like. After several adjustments he gets the likeness correct. At this point the Not-So-Big-Bad-Wolf materializes and the bunny tries to hide. However, when the Not-So-Big-Bad-Wolf catches the bunny, it turns out to be none other than his good friend dressed as a wolf.

The story is told through a series of cleverly drawn simple illustrations and short, simple text. This format makes it very accessible to young readers. The book could be incorporated into a lesson on not judging things at first sight as the author does an excellent job illustrating things are not always as scary as they seem. This book is similar to Brief Thief also by Escoffier as it uses illustration and simple text to convey a lesson. Overall, this book was charming and serves as an excellent way to teach a valuable lesson to young children.

Fiction, Picture Book
Stephanie Reppert, Tamaqua Public Library
The Mephisto Kiss
Jordan was a seemingly normal teenager and her father just happened to be the President of the United States. As the First Daughter, she knew the circumstances people would take to get what they want. But she wasn’t expecting to be kidnapped or for her boyfriend to be shot. She also didn’t expect to find out that there were such a thing as Sons of Hell and that she was meant to fall in love with one. This addicting tale goes into the mind of Jordan and the man she is meant to be with as they tell of sacrifice for the greater good, but also for love. This book is great for mature students who love to be enveloped in adventure, love, and sacrifice. No one will be able to put it down.

Fantasy

Kaitlyn Verdon, Student, Kutztown University

Harry to the Rescue!
Favorite characters, Harry Cat and Tucker Mouse, from A Cricket in Times Square star in these early reader books. In this adventure, Tucker Mouse becomes trapped overnight in a shoeshine store in Times Square as Harry Cat searches for a way to rescue him. This title along with others in the series will appeal to beginning readers as well as feline aficionados. Other titles reviewed include Tucker’s Beetle Band and Starring Harry. Recommended.

Fiction
Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School

Summer on the Moon
Fogelin, Adrian. Summer on the Moon. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2012. 978-1-56145-626-0. $15.95. Gr.6-8
This book is about two boys, Socko and Damien. It is the beginning of summer vacation and these city boys are ready for a relaxing summer. However, it is sometimes hard to relax in their downtown atmosphere. The tarantulas’ gang leader has been after the boys and they have had some dangerous run-ins with the gang. Their families struggle through some tough times as well, until Socko’s mom announces that their situation will be changing. A rich relative needs someone to take care of him and Socko and his mother are the only ones who can. They will be moving out of the city to an isolated development that is going bankrupt. Meanwhile, Socko is worried about leaving Damien on his own in the city. This book follows Socko’s journey and adventures as he leaves the city and takes on caring for his elderly great-grandfather. Although he is away from the city, there are still many adventures and worries in his new environment.

Fiction
Tiffany Yehl, 5th grade teacher, PA Leadership Charter School
**Friends**


Bubble the goldfish and Cat the cat are best friends. Cat love to go out and explore the world but Bubble is confined to his fish bowl. While wandering in the park, Cat comes up with an idea for a way for his fish friend to join him in wandering about in the outside world. Bubble rides in a bucket as Cat carries him, showing him the world beyond his fishbowl. Cat shows Bubble several bodies of water, each progressively larger, and tells the fish that he would be happier if he lived in the ocean where there is more to see. Bubble declines and says that if he went away to live in the ocean he wouldn’t have Cat to be his friend. The simple but heartwarming story is a cute tale of friendship although the two lead characters are hardly a believable pairing. Bright watercolor illustrations flow beautifully with the text giving readers large scenes to enjoy on each two-page spread.

*Picture Book*  
*Mandalee Flannery, Student, Kutztown University*

**These Seas Count!**


Mr. Tate’s class takes a field trip to the seashore, where they meet Captain Ned, an environmentalist who is leading a Beach Clean-Up Day. The children learn about what creates pollution and how pollution harms the oceans. They learn about why the oceans are important and why we should do our best to keep them clean and healthy. Midway through the book, the double meaning of the title is clear as it shifts from a didactic story of the importance of the ocean, to a counting book featuring ocean creatures. The digital collage illustrations are fresh and compelling, and the counting book portion of the text is lovely. Unfortunately, the counting book portion does not mesh seamlessly with the explanations of the water cycle and the importance of phytoplankton. While the message that we are all connected is an important one for children to receive, the audience that will enjoy the counting book is not quite the same as the audience that will understand the science. For a clearer, more inspiring look at the role of phytoplankton and the health of our oceans, readers should refer to Molly Bang’s *Ocean Sunlight*.

*Picture Book*  
*Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster*

**Mallory and Mary Ann Take New York**


A pinky swear is a pinky swear no matter what happens right? Well Best friends 10 year old Mallory and Mary Ann’s friendship is put to the test when they enter a TV contest. They both dream of becoming fashion designers and enter a contest where the winner’s sketch of their fashion design will be created and they will meet the celebrity, Fashion Fran! The two best friends pinky swear that if one of them wins they will try to figure out a way to get both of them on TV. Well, Mallory wins the contest, a trip to New York City to be on TV and model her winning outfit. The girls are so excited but then Mallory remembers her promise. How in the world is she going to get her best friend on TV? A pinky swear is a pinky swear, right? Friedman has written a perfect book for young girls whose dreams do come true. Readers will enjoy this light story of friendship. Elementary girls will especially find this book a fun read.

*Chapter Book*  
*Melinda Bender, Librarian, Thirteenth and Green Elementary School*
Spring Blossoms

Ever wonder the names of some flowers? Pink flowers that grow in clusters are from a cherry tree. White dogwood wears a “frosty crown”. There are so many trees and flowers and Gerber goes into detail about several of them. This book goes into detail about several flowers and their male and female names. Students will love going through this book and describing the details of each flower and tree. It is a perfect book to read to students.

Kaitlyn Verdon, Student, Kutztown University

Hunter Moran Saves the Universe

Twins Hunter and Zack find a cryptic note at the grocery store that reads Bomb/Twin REVENGE! Could someone be out to get them? Does it have anything to do with the strange phone call Zack received earlier in the day from a person saying they were Agent 5 and the original is missing from S-T-U. What does all this mean? It is summer break for Hunter and Zack who are in 5th grade at St. Ursula’s School. So far their summer vacation has been boring until now. Through the use of their detective skills Hunter and Zack find out that the note was written by the town dentist Dr. Diglio. When they anonymously call him and ask about the note he yells Olyushka and says he feels bad about them dying. Hunter comes to the conclusion that Dr. Diglio has a bomb he calls Olyushka and he is going to set it off somewhere in town. They have to find out where and save their town from destruction. This book is supposed to be filled with adventure and fun as the main characters go searching for clues but instead the story seemed to be dragging on. The story tends to be a little dry and boring. Not recommended.

Melinda Bender, Librarian, Thirteenth and Green Elementary School

Technology: How Today’s Technology Really Works

Technology is one title in the Scholastic Discover More Series. Outstanding color illustrations and photographs are complemented by text descriptions and anecdotal facts. Similar to How This Works, the topics range from computers, flash drives, and smartphones to spy technology, electric guitars, roller coasters and space exploration. The high interest, attractive presentation includes diagrams, 3-D visuals, cross-sections, and timelines. Readers will be amused with the visual timeline and comparisons of the development of the cell phone. The remarkable facts make this title as fun as the Guinness Book of World Records. Although not an in-depth treatment of the topics, additional resources are included in some of the entries. A glossary and index help the researcher make the most of this book. Students will definitely enjoy browsing through the pages and getting lost in the contents. An added attraction to this title is a link to a download for the free digital companion book, Cool Tech Heroes. Highly recommended for students and adults.

Nancy (Smith) Latanision, Kutztown University

Department of Library Science & Instructional Technology
Mommy! Mommy!
Two chicks look for their mother hen on the farm and sometimes they find her but sometimes they find something else that looks like her. The simple and artistic watercolor-like illustrations make it easy for children to follow along and notice how sometimes things are not always what they seem. Despite the simplicity of the artwork, the chicks are very expressive and cute. Recommended.

Board Book
Amber Sams, Librarian, Saucon Valley High School

Catty Jane Who Hated the Rain
This cute story is about a cat named Catty Jane who does not enjoy rainy days. The story begins as it is a very rainy, dreary day and her mother is trying to cheer her up. She offers to play a game with her or have cookies, but Catty Jane wants no part. She is miserable because of the rain and complains. Next, Catty Jane’s friends come to visit. Pig, Frog, and Goose all love the rain and explain why. After each friend’s positive explanation Catty follows with a negative comment. The friends then decide it would be a fun idea to have a rainy day party where they eat cookies, sign louder than the thunder, and cover the windows so that Catty is not afraid of the lightning. By the time their party is through, the rain has stopped and the sun is shining. Catty enjoyed their rain party and the friends go outside to play.

Picture Book; Fiction
Nicole Stratchko, Kindergarten Teacher, Willow Lane Elementary

Jay- Z
This is an in-depth look at the life of Shawn Corey Carter who is better known as recording artist Jay-Z. This title is one of many in the USA Today Lifeline Biographies. This biography also features a timeline, a glossary, source notes, a selected bibliography, and further reading books and websites. These titles are appealing for research or pleasure reading.

Biography
Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School

Prisoner B-3087
Yanek Gruner is forced to go into hiding with his family when he is ten years old. After being captured by the Nazis, he spends most of his teenage years in concentration camps. While this story shows the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps during World War II, its most valuable feature is the comparison between the ten different camps between which Yanek was shuffled. The narrator conveys the mind-numbing terror inflicted on the captives by the Nazi regime, as well as the betrayal of the Jewish kapos, prisoners put in charge of other prisoners. This story tracks with historical evidence; there is documentation of most of the places and events described.

Realistic Fiction
Marge McCormick, Tamaqua Area Middle School
Cane Toad: The World’s Biggest Toad

Kids love learning about extremes in the animal kingdom, and therein lies the appeal of Bearport’s “Even More Super Sized!” series. Targeted at early elementary students, the text is simple and accompanied by bold, close-up color photos, which enhance the presented facts. In *Cane Toad*, topics covered include habitat, diet, predators, life cycle, adaptations for survival, and the effect the cane toad has in environments where it has been artificially introduced. First and second grade students doing basic research will find this to be a solid resource. Text features include text boxes of additional facts, labels to draw attention to certain parts of the photos, headings on each page of text, easy-to-read maps with simple keys, and bolded words which can be found in the glossary. Back matter includes a graphic comparing the cane toad to other large toads, glossary, index, a bibliography for further reading, and a link to Bearport’s website. Bearport’s website provides links to four authoritative websites with information about cane toads, as well as a printable crossword puzzle. Other books in the series include *English Mastiff, Flemish Giant Rabbit, Giant Pacific Octopus, Giant Weta, King Cobra, Trumpeter Swan*, and *Walking Sticks*. The series is a good choice for libraries looking for high-interest informational texts and sources for animal research projects.

Nonfiction

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster

Weather: Whipping Up a Storm

Learning about the weather can be turned into a fun activity with this book written by Green. The pictures are very cute and will catch the attention of the upper elementary child. The visuals and writing pair up to teach the reader about many weather related topics such as seasons, forecast, climate change, the El Nino effect, wind, clouds, weather fronts, snow, rain, frost, lightning, hurricanes, drought, among other related topics. Each specific topic page includes three listed facts, a more detailed description about it follows in language that is easy to understand for the younger reader, and three statistics. The book includes a subject index and a glossary for the weather terms that the reader may not be familiar with. It also gives the reader a removable poster that is designed in the same art style and includes all the topics that are covered in the text. Basher Basics has created other informational topic books in the same cute art style and *Weather* is a great compliment to the others in the series. This book is a treat for any upper elementary aged reader who is interested in learning more about weather or simply introducing them to the various topics.

Chapter Book; Informational

Sara Moyer, Library Assistant, Yocum Library at Reading Area Community College
Speak Up, Tommy!
On the playground or in the classroom, Tommy just doesn’t fit in. At recess, Tommy hides in a corner while his classmates play. Two boys make fun of Tommy as he struggles to understand American football - it’s nothing like football in Israel! In the reading circle, Tommy gets quiet when it’s his turn to read. Tommy is much more comfortable with his first language, Hebrew.

Tommy is tired of everyone telling him to “speak up” and decides to not speak at all. He remains true to his word until a police officer and his dog, Samson, come to the school. Samson notices a tennis ball in Tommy’s pocket and starts barking. Between the barking and the officer trying to calm the dog, Tommy forgets that he is not speaking and calls out “sheket!”, the Hebrew word for quiet.

Samson immediately stops barking, and the officer shares that the dog was trained with Hebrew commands. Tommy is happy to share that Hebrew is his first language, and agrees to teach the officer Hebrew in exchange for English lessons. Tommy’s classmates follow suit and volunteer to help Tommy with his English and teach him about American football.

The story was inspired by true events, as the reader learns in the Author’s Note. The illustrator uses a variety of fonts and colors inside text bubbles to effectively communicate characters’ feelings and roles. A fun inclusion is a list of common dog commands in English and Hebrew, although a pronunciation guide would be helpful for non-Hebrew speakers. Elementary students, particularly English Language Learners, will relate to Tommy’s feelings about reading aloud in class. The book’s message is clear and the story of a boy and a dog will engage even young readers.

Round is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes
Shapes are found everywhere you look from round tacos to the round pot of stew cooking on the stove. *Round is a Tortilla* is a fun shape book that encourages a child to look around outside or maybe in their abuela’s (grandmother’s) kitchen and think about the shapes found in the room. Each page has bright colorful painted pictures depicting scenes of children with family members introducing and identifying a new shape. This picture book has a Latin theme that runs throughout the story from talking about food to describing their home. Within the story the reader is asked to locate and identify more shapes on the page. Bilingual Spanish students will be able to identify with many of the shape found in their neighborhood. At the end of the book is a glossary defining Spanish words found thru the book. This book would be very helpful for young bilingual students with nice visuals and comparisons of shapes found in everyday life. I would highly recommend this book as a great multicultural edition to a collection.

Carrie T. Kreider, Graduate, Kutztown University

Melinda Bender, Librarian, Thirteenth and Green Elementary School
Drummer Boy of John John
Carnival is coming to Trinidad and Winston can’t stop thinking about the Roti King’s “famous folded pancakes filled with chicken and secret herbs and spices”. But without a band named the “Best Band of Carnival,” Winston can’t win the rotis. As he makes his way through the village Winston sees and hears bands practicing, captured with bright colors and onomatopoetic words that children will love to read aloud. While sitting under a mango tree Winston discovers that a band doesn’t have to be made up of traditional instruments. With the help of some friends, Winston forms a band complete with brightly colored “instruments” from his discovery.
This husband and wife author-illustrator team use fun text and brightly colored patterns to tell this story inspired by the life of Winston “Spree” Simon. The Author’s Note provides a useful background, and the glossary and pronunciation guide help the reader to understand Carnival in Trinidad. Early to late elementary students will enjoy the story of the underdog coming out on top, and adults will appreciate the accuracy of the island instruments as well as the hidden science lesson on how high and low sounds are made.
Picture Book

First Peas to the Table
Maya’s class is planting a garden inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s garden at Monticello. Drawing on stories about contests between Jefferson and his neighbors, the class holds a “First Peas to the Table” contest, in which they compete to see who can be the first to grow enough peas to fill a bowl. Maya and her classmates are encouraged to follow Jefferson’s model and experiment with different growing methods. Readers will experience the highs and lows with Maya as her first efforts fail but she refuses to be discouraged. Through this fictional story, readers will learn a little bit about gardening, Thomas Jefferson, scientific experimentation, persistence, good sportsmanship and friendship. Backmatter includes a bibliography of resources about Jefferson and his garden, and notes for all references to Jefferson and his gardening methods. Soft watercolor illustrations contribute to the satisfying feeling of a group of students involved in authentic inquiry. Ambitious teachers may use this title as an inspiration for their own cross-curricular studies; teachers with stricter time constraints will find it useful for teaching about a little explored aspect of a favorite president.
Picture Book
Lost and Found
This beautifully illustrated story tells the tale of a young boy named Justin who has lost his hat.  This isn’t just any old hat, but his favorite hat.  A hat his grandmother had made for him, and she was coming to visit that weekend.  His mother ordered him to find his hat when he arrived at school the next day.  He looked everyone he could but it did not turn up.  His only other option was to visit the “lost and found” where no one where wanted to go.  It was guarded by an old, grumpy custodian named Mr. Rumkowsky.  Kids never dared look in the lost and found because they feared him.  Justin had no choice.  He needed to find the hat by Friday.  Brave as he could be, he visited Mr. Rumkowsky.  It turned out, he wasn’t as mean as the students had perceived him to be.  Each day Justin visited and found many items that his friends had lost, but not his hat.  He also found odd items the Mr. Rumkowsky allowed him to take home, but no hat.  It wasn’t until Friday when Justin was digging in the very bottom of the lost and found did he find “his” hat.  When looking on the inside it said the name: “Sue.”  This hat turned out to be his mother’s from many years ago. She too had lost her hat and was too afraid to go to the lost and found.

Mary Walker Wears the Pants: The True Story of the Doctor, Reformer, and Civil War Hero
During the civil war, an independent woman named Mary Edwards Walker, defied social conventions and decided to take on the man’s world.  She became a field surgeon when women were only allowed to be nurses.  She wore pants when society said she had to wear a dress and a corset.  She even was taken prisoner and put in a Confederate jail.  Mary was an unconventional woman who helped shape the role of women in medicine, clothing reform, and the suffragist movement.  As a biography aimed at a younger audience, this book is set up well for story sequencing.  The illustrations give a sense of what is going on in the story and although the book covers the civil war, it does so in general, easy to understand terms.  The last page features a short, more detailed biography of Ms. Walker.  This book would be a good addition to an elementary school library biography collection.

Bruno Mars: Pop Singer and Producer
This biographical book of the 26-year-old singer Bruno Mars is a young fans dream.  There is a lot of information about how Bruno grew up in Hawaii, performing in his parent’s doo-wop shows.  He was even an Elvis impersonator at the age of seven performing on stage and in the movie *Honeymoon in Vegas*.  In between all the information there are many colorful pictures and interesting facts about him.  There is also music vocabulary definitions located throughout the book.  This biography story tells how a young Bruno moved to L.A. to make it in the music business but he was rejected time and time again.  It took many years of perseverance and many odd jobs till he finally made it in the music industry.  Throughout the book the story sends a positive message to young readers that you have to work hard.  The singer gives credit to his success due to the support of family and friends.  If you are looking for a quality up-to-date biography that is age appropriate for elementary students that is not boring, then this is the one.  Students will thank you for this purchase.
Jennifer Lawrence, The Hunger Games’ Girl on Fire
This book is a biography of Jennifer Lawrence, the amazing young actress who plays The Hunger Games’ Katniss Everdeen in the movie series based on the book series by Suzanne Collins. This book is filled with facts about Jennifer, from the fact that she grew up on a Kentucky horse farm, to the fact that she read all three Hunger Games books in four days even before she got the part of Katniss! I loved this book! I had a great time learning more about Jennifer and find her life fascinating. I like the set-up of the book as well; it starts with an introduction, then moves on to her life as a simple Kentucky girl, making it in Hollywood, and finally becoming Katniss!
Biography shelby foster, student, kutztown university

The Normal Kid
This endearing story is sure to cause readers to stop and think about who is really “normal.” The story is told through the eyes of fifth graders Sylvan and Charity, alternately. They have both just started fifth grade and each tell their own perspective of what Mr. Inayatullah’s class is like. As Sylvan, whose parents are divorced, and Charity, who has just returned to the United States from Kenya where her dad was a missionary, get to know each other through a shared mission, they start to realize that it is normal for everyone to be just a little bit weird. Even Brian, who spends all his free time jumping on his trampoline and sometimes acts inappropriately in class, is not so bad. In the end, both Sylvan and Charity unexpectedly learn a thing or two from their friend with special needs. Holmes’ middle-grade novel is written in a way that children can relate to and enjoy. It exposes young readers to multiple perspectives, a unique culture, and different family situations. Lastly, the novel may help readers to consider what it is like to be different and how they should treat those around them who differ. This book would be a good addition to an upper elementary or middle school classroom library or could be used as a springboard to discuss various kinds of diversity.
Chapter Book; Fiction Emily L. Hershey, Academic Coach, Agora Cyber Charter School
The Fire Horse Girl


Honeyman has certainly brought to life adventurous, charismatic characters beginning with a very headstrong young girl, Jade Moon, and a mysterious male visitor to her home in China, Sterling Promise. Jade Moon was born in the year of the “Fire Horse” which the Chinese believe to be bad luck for any female born during this year. That fact coupled with the death of her mother during her birth had made this young woman an outcast in her family and village. When her “paper” cousin Sterling Promise arrives with documents insuring Jade Moon’s father’s entry into the States, a private deal is negotiated for Sterling Promise to marry Jade Moon. Wishing for a better life for herself, Jade Moon was consumed with leaving China and living freely in America. Their arrival and internment at Angel Island was not what Jade Moon anticipated America to be. With much courage Jade Moon rebels from her father and his arranged marriage and carves out a life for herself beginning with impersonating as a man, being lured into the life of a hatchet man for the tong, saving numerous young Chinese women from enslavement as prostitutes and finally finding love with her mysterious homeland visitor. This intriguing story informs the reader of the very different immigration processes for the Chinese coming into America through Angel Island, San Francisco, California. Because of the San Francisco earthquake in 1906 many immigration papers were destroyed, which caused very long delays for the Chinese and Japanese immigrants. Some people were detained up to two years. This book is an exceptional novel as it is historically informative, suspenseful and an open-ended love story. Hopefully, Honeyman will continue to write of Jade Moon’s future adventures, maybe while her adopted Chinese children are napping!

Chapter Book: Historical Fiction

Susan M. Schlosser, Staff, Tamaqua Public Library

Samphire Song


Young horse-lovers will appreciate this story of a young girl, Jodie, and the gray stallion she loves. Beleaguered by family problems, rescuing and training Samphire becomes Jodie’s mission in life. She is forced to sell him but works hard to buy him back, only to discover that he has disappeared. In the process of saving him, she uncovers an animal trafficking ring and saves the lives of dozens of other animals. Her obsession is believable, although winning their first competition near the end of the story is a little implausible. The author is British and the story is set in the United Kingdom, but traditional British usage and slang was nearly non-existent. From the notes, I suspect that this book was edited to convert British colloquialisms to American English. The bond between girl and horse will touch the hearts of young female readers.

Coming of Age

Marge McCormick, Tamaqua Area Middle School
The Twelve-fingered Boy

15-year old Shreve has had a tough life without a father and an alcoholic for a mother. He has basically had to raise his younger brother on his own in the family’s trailer. Now in a juvenile detention center, he is doing okay for himself running a candy business behind the backs of the guards. Then he gets a new cellmate, Jack, who’s also had a tough life, but in a different way. Shreve takes Jack under his wing and learns that Jack has powers that come from his twelve fingers and twelve toes. When normally shy and guarded Jack gets angry, his powers emerge as an explosion so powerful it can kill people. Two strangers who are aware of Jack’s power start visiting the center and asking questions. When they use their minds to enter the bodies of Shreve and Jack, some of that power is left behind in Shreve and he learns that he can also enter the bodies of others, read their minds, and will them to do what he wants. Shreve and Jack escape the detention center and run from these strangers, headed toward Maryland where they hope to find out more about why they are after Jack. They travel around the county, honing their skills, when they come across one mind that Shreve reads and cannot ignore. An evil man has kidnapped a young girl and keeps her in his basement where he regularly abuses her. Shreve and Jack make a brave and dangerous rescue, which lands Shreve in the hospital and on the national news. Soon, the people they were running from find them and finally succeed in taking Jack away. At the close of the book, Shreve is back in the juvenile detention center, on his best behavior, and occasionally gets a letter from Jack who is in some sort of a training school with other kids who also have powers. This is the first of what is going to be a four book series and earned a starred review in the ALA’s Editor’s Choice edition of *Booklist* as a best pick of the year for young adults. Readers will connect with both Shreve and Jack and root for their success as the underdogs. Shreve’s voice comes through as someone who is both smart, as they rely on his survival skills, and caring, because he took care of both his little brother and Jack and his refusal to leave a situation knowing a young girl was being abused. His witty remarks as narrator are also entertaining and will appeal to the teenage audience. Recommended.

Realistic Fiction; Science Fiction

Amber Sams, Librarian, Saucon Valley High School

Mortensen’s Escapades #3: The Red Ruby

Grade Level: 6-12.

The time traveling adventures of Mortensen continue in this third novel in the series. He is one of many Time agents who make sure history does not get messed up, which is especially important now that one of the time machine guns have gotten into the enemy’s hands. As in the previous novels, This story jumps to many time periods that include on board the Titanic, Burma in 1802, and New York in 1937 and it is all about the pursuit of the cursed Red Ruby and the people who want it. The art is in a cartoony style and each character has a unique look to them. There is a nice balance of dialogue to the actual artwork and allows the reader build up their visual literacy skills. The novel is suited toward the middle or high school age range because of the gun use. However, it is very brief and is not graphic in the action scenes so it can also be suited for the Sixth grade age level. As in the other novels in this series, there is a section in the back of the story that provides detailed information and pictures of the historical events mentioned in the plot, so if the reader is unfamiliar with the topic they can learn about it there. These graphic novels are a nice way to introduce certain places and events in the past as well as incorporate the science fiction aspect of time-travel.

Graphic Novel; History/Time Travel

Sara Moyer, Library Assistant, Yocum Library at Reading Area Community College
**The Amazing Harry Kellar: Great American Magician**


Do you believe in magic? This book tells the story of Harry Kellar, the first internationally known American magician. Kellar was so popular that he became the model for the Wizard of Oz and was looked up to by great magicians like Harry Houdini! The book is written biographically covering various times in his life. Jarrow uses plenty of old, historic pictures including full page pictures at the beginning of each chapter. The research is very well done and Jarrow includes citations and direct quotes from historic sources to back up her information. Beyond magic, the book deals with mysticism, séances, and various other-worldly experiences that magicians try to display. The book is an easy read because it has a lot of pictures to supplement the text. It is difficult to compare the book to anything similar because there is not much that is similar. I recommend this book for teachers to use around the Halloween holiday.

Biography

*Andrew Boyer, PA State Employee*

**Andrew Jenks: My Adventures as a Young Filmmaker**


This is the amazing and inspirational story about a boy who grew up following his father, Bruce Jenks, Assistant Secretary General for the UN, around the world. Andrew grew up, dropped out of college and decided that he was going to create films his own way - by living in a nursing home and following the lives of the residents. This film went on to be a movie that caught the attention of MTV who started a show with the same idea. This crazy journey and the story follow the life of the young filmmaker. This is a ride that the reader will not regret taking. His story and the stories of the people he filmed are inspiring. This is a great book to have in any collection and would make a wonderful book report for a student who wants to see that it just takes one to make a difference.

Memoir

*Brittany Lee, Student, Kutztown University*

**The Summer Prince**


A dazzling pyramid in Brazil, each tier a step up to the elite at the top- this is now home to the survivors of war. The King is elected by the people and he chooses the Queen. His life is short as king. One year. June Costa, is a teen artist by day, defiant media artist by night. She and her best friend Gil, get carried away with the rest of the young people who support the handsome, young, bottom tiered Enki for King. Together, these three turn the status quo on their ear with the illegal use of technology, flaunted relationships, and bold statements against the government. They know that the end must come. This book is one that is hard to put down. It has the popular elements of dystopian society and teenage angst.

Chapter Book: Science Fiction

*Gwenn Davis, Librarian, Stroudsburg Jr. High School*
Zombie Makers: True Stories of Nature’s Undead

Imagine a wasp using its stinger to inject venom in a specific area of another organism’s brain that targets the nerves controlling walking movements and makes it impossible for that organism to start walking again; or imagine having a three foot long worm curled inside your leg that releases chemicals causing a large blister to form on the skin that bursts, resulting in a terrible sore that burns as if it is on fire, which causes the infected to run for a lake or stream – exactly what the worm wants you to do! With this book one no longer has to imagine – for fact is stranger than fiction as the information in this book proves! With the interest in vampires waning and the interest in zombies waxing (as proven by the popularity of the television show, *Walking Dead*!), this book is not only filled with amazingly gross and yucky facts, it also presents them in a fascinating fashion. Divided into five chapters with an introduction and afterword, each chapter starts with a numbered “Zombie Trait” side note that summarizes the behavior of the infected zombie victim. The photography is wonderful with repetition of captioning, “Zombie Maker,” “Nickname,” “Zombie Victim,” and “Location” used throughout the chapters. The opening chapter page is blood-red, blotched with darker red and greens and the red and green blotching pattern is carried throughout the chapter. Each chapter ends with a section titled, “The Science Behind the Story.” A Glossary, Selected Bibliography, and More to Explore section makes this a wonderful resource book. It is also noteworthy to mention the book is a Junior Library Guild selection. There is plenty of gross-factor-appealing stuff in this book to entice the most jejune middle school student and this book would serve well as a “hook” to spur interest in biology or act equally well as a stand-alone nonfiction book filled with bizarre facts of our natural world.

Chapter Book: Nonfiction

Gayle R. Heath, Library Director, Tamaqua Public Library

Shaking the Foundation: Charles Darwin and the Theory of Evolution

This educational book for young adults is a very intriguing and very informational. The book starts out with a brief overview of the times and other ideas that came before Darwin’s. It proceeds to go through Darwin’s education and how he got the opportunity to go on the *Beagle*. It goes through all the things that he observed and recorded on the adventure and shows various pictures of the work that Darwin did. The book goes on to inform the reader about Darwin’s time in the Galapagos Islands, and what he learned and obtained there. It goes on to say how he developed his theory when returning home. It goes on to give a brief summary of his family life and proceeds to explain why Darwin did not publish his results and his theory right away. It goes on to further explain how he got the courage to show is results and goes through the extreme ridicule he went through when he published his results. The book finishes up with more of the current scientific theories and ideas. The book was very well written and filled with lots of useful facts and information. The added pictures and charts help the reader understand and connect with Darwin more and are very informational as well. Overall, this is a very good book that young adults will be sure to obtain lots of information from it.

Nonfiction

Hannah Miller, Staff, Tamaqua Public Library
Lazy Daisy, Crankie Frankie

The animals on the narrator’s farm do not do what they are supposed to do. Instead of eating grass, playing in the mud or laying eggs, they eat jelly, and spend the day gazing in the mirror or dancing in purple underwear. A steady rhythm and easy rhyming couplets make this a delightfully silly read aloud for even the youngest audiences. Listeners will enjoy guessing the closing rhyme of each couplet. Whimsical watercolor illustrations only add to the fun. As each animal is introduced by name with a short description of how she should behave, she is pictured on a double page spread against a white background. The page turn reveals a full bleed, colorful double page spread of the animal engaged in an absurd activity against the backdrop of ordinary farm events. The book wraps up with the animals going to bed and finally doing what they should: sleeping. Endpapers show the farm in day and in night. Sometimes story time requires a quick and silly book that encourages a light amount of audience participation: this title fits the bill perfectly.

Picture Book

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster

We Are Their Voice

Grades 7-8.

Kathy Kacer’s collection contains written responses about the Holocaust by middle school students in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Some reflect on personal experiences related by survivors; others put themselves in the shoes of the victims to imagine for themselves the horrors experienced by those who suffered at the hands of Nazi soldiers. Several drawings illustrate their impressions. These students’ reactions help to make this piece of history come alive for young readers. Their interpretations may help other middle school students clarify their own understanding of The Holocaust, with the hope that history might never repeat itself.

Anthology

Marge McCormick, Tamaqua Area Middle School

Prince of the Elves

Grades 6-9.

This graphic novel is the fifth book in the Amulet series. When Emily’s family of elves is taken away by guards, Max Griffin initially helps to reunite them. Later, Max, who is a Stonekeeper, joins his sister and friends in battle against the elves. These imaginative young characters wield immense power in their fictional world. Hundreds of vivid graphic images are colorful and creative. At times, several consecutive pages lack captioning, which make it more difficult to follow the plot. With an action-packed story likely to appeal to middle-school-age boys, Kazu Kibuishi has hit another home run.

Graphic Novel

Marge McCormick, Tamaqua Area Middle School
Open This Little Book

What happens when you open this little book? You open another little book. And then another. And another. This creative picture book tells the story of a group of animals each reading their own books. With each turn of the page, the pages become smaller and smaller until the reader is reading the tiniest little book. Then the pages become bigger and bigger as the story comes to an end. Readers will delight in this cute story and unique presentation. This book is highly recommended for book lovers of all ages.

Picture Book  
*Megan Phibbs, Librarian, Washington Elementary*

Atlantis: The Search for the Lost City

Readers who like puzzles and mysteries will enjoy searching the deep for clues to find the lost city of Atlantis. This book comes with a decoder that will guide the reader through a series of puzzles. The reader follows Amy James, who helps piece together the clues that will lead to the sunken city of Atlantis. This is a great book for anyone who is interested in Atlantis and likes puzzles. There is a lot of decoding so it would not be recommended for younger students or anyone with a short attention span. The images in this book are fantastic and look so real that they could be photographs.

Puzzle book, Mystery  
*Brittany Lee, Student, Kutztown University*

The Peanut-Free Café

Simon loved peanut butter and had it every day for lunch until a new student named Grant, who was allergic to peanuts, came to his school. Suddenly Simon had to choose between his peanut butter and a chance to sit with his friends in the new, fun-filled Peanut-Free Café. Koster has created a great book for introducing the idea of allergies, peanut or otherwise, to young children. The book explains Grant’s allergy in simple terms that could be expanded upon depending on the age/grade of the students. The characters are easy to relate to, and the plot is simple and engaging. The book also includes a note about allergies to parents and teachers from a medical doctor on the last page. I recommend this book to all public and school libraries.

Picture Book  
*Karen J. Wanamaker, Outreach Librarian, Kutztown University of Pa.*
The Future We Left Behind

Sixteen-year-old Peter Vincent lives in a world of technology. Humans conduct their lives with the help of the Link, a mental internet that connects people with nothing more than a thought. Humans themselves have changed, integrating technology into their own bodies. This life is commonplace for Peter. Being the son of the famous scientist David Vincent, Peter is very familiar with the ways of the world. Until he meets Amalfi “Alpha” Del Ray. Alpha is a part of the Strakerites, an almost cult-like group who believe that humanity has been unknowingly upgraded by aliens throughout history. Having been taught by his father that Strakerism is utter nonsense, Peter is hesitant to accept her beliefs. Still, the two become fast friends, and Alpha quickly turns to Peter for help when her father mysteriously vanishes, something she believes is related to his investigation of the Strakerist beliefs. As the two discover more clues, Peter makes some shocking discoveries about Strakerism.

*The Future we Left Behind* is a companion novel to Lancaster’s book *Human 4*, and picks up 1000 years after the 21st century setting of the first book. A great read for science fiction fans, *The Future We Left Behind* addresses the issues of human’s need for technology, as well as the question of just what it means to be a human being. Peter, despite being a character 1000 years in the future, still goes through the relatable journey of being a teenager. In addition, Lancaster engages readers with a fast-paced story rife with suspense. With so many twists and turns, readers will continue turning the pages just to see where the story will go next.

Science Fiction  
*Adam Keister, Student, Kutztown University*

Assassins, Traitors and Spies

This book is a very brief study about various spies, traitors and assassins that have appeared in United States history. Each person is given two pages and a short biography of who they were and what they did that made them a relevant subject of the book. The book doesn’t go into great depth as to the circumstances of or events surrounding their actions. The book is almost painfully short as it gives only a small taste of each situation before moving onto the next biography. It covers well known traitors such as Benedict Arnold and John Wilkes Booth and less renowned people such as Robert Hanssen. Many of the cases take place during the cold war and as such are associated with Russia. The book focusses only on traitors and spies of America and doesn’t go into depth about general espionage or security which provides a rather incomplete picture of the profession. The book could be used in a history of the United States but otherwise doesn’t hold up very well on its own except as a gateway book to get readers that otherwise don’t find reading interesting.

Non-Fiction  
*Joseph Wenzel, Student, Kutztown University*

Delicious Vegetarian Main Dishes

The excellent photographs of the finished dishes look appetizing. This title will help kids see that there are many deliciously healthy meals. Who Needs Meat? Sloppy Joes, Simple Vegetable Lasagna, Crispy Tofu Sticks, Tortilla Tower and Baked Potato Pileup are some of the main dishes which are all featured with simple step-by-step directions. Key information also included is: an equipment list, a technique list, safety tips, a special ingredients glossary, an index, and website information.

Cookbook  
*Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School*
**Penguin’s Hidden Talent**  

What should Penguin and his friends do this year? Plan a talent show of course! But while everyone was practicing their talent, Penguin couldn’t think what his talent was. So he visited with his friends Bear, Albatross, Rabbit, and Fox. He tried juggling with Bear, Swallowing whole fish with Albatross, doing magic tricks with Rabbit, and burping the alphabet with Fox. But Penguin wasn’t good at any of these. So instead he planned the talent show and it was fantastic! Everyone had such a great time. But Penguin still didn’t think he had a talent. Latimer has created such a good story about finding what you’re good at. And that it might not look like everyone else’s. This story is a good pick-me-up for children who think they “don’t have a talent,” just like Penguin.

*Picture Book*  
Kaitlyn Verdon, Student, Kutztown University

**Dirt**  

This nonfiction book is about dirt and contains simple experiments and facts for lower elementary students. Some of the experiments ask questions such as, “what is soil made of”, “how do rocks become soil”, and “how do worms help plants”. At the beginning of the book it reminds children to get permission from an adult before doing the experiments and to wash their hands when they are finished. The experiments contain the different elements of an experiment including a list of materials, directions, predictions, observations, charts, and questions. Many photographs are used throughout the book to guide children through the experiments. Scientific terms are bolded and questions are in red. The book includes a table of contents, glossary, index, and list of sources. At the end of the book the answers to the experiments are listed. This book is part of a series of books on experiments called Science Slam Fundamental Experiments. The book could be used for enrichment in a classroom to go over dirt experiments that might not be mentioned in a science text book. Children who are interested in science might check out this book at a public library, but this kind of book would most likely be used by teachers. Also, this book could be used with the Dig Into Reading Summer Reading theme at public libraries.

*Nonfiction*  
Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library

**You Can Do It!**  

This easy-reader conveys a strong, timeless message in a simple way. Two alligators see a sign for a big race. One wants to attempt the race and believes he can win. A third alligator, who also wants to win, shows up and tells the first alligator he cannot do it, but his friend continues to encourage him despite the negative messages from the bully. The book uses word bubbles to convey which alligator is speaking, and the pictures distinguish the three unnamed characters through simple accessories (the friend has a hair bow and the bully has a baseball cap). The dialogue is simple, using phrases like, “I can do it,” “Cannot,” and “Can so” throughout until finally the first alligator is able to say, “I did it!” This book would be great for an early reader. The repetition of the word “can” builds confidence, and the message is twofold- yes, I can do whatever I put my mind to, and yes, I can read!

*Picture Book*  
Emily L. Hershey, Academic Coach, Agora Cyber Charter School
**Flick, Ricka, Dicka and the New Dotted Dresses**


Flicka, Ricka, Dicka are three identical triplets from Sweden. They have brand new polka dot dresses and they are told not to get them messy. The sisters try their best, but when the opportunity to help an old woman comes up, the three little girls carry wood, feed the chickens, and milk the cow. In the process, the new dresses get dirty and torn. The moral of “helping others” is reinforced when the girls’ mother does not get mad at the three little girls for roughing up their new dresses and instead encourages their helpful behavior. This book was originally published in 1946. Because it is a reprint of a vintage book, the illustrations and story are typical of 1940’s and 50’s children’s books. The story is idyllic, the girls a little too sweet, and there is a blatant moral message. However, the themes can be applied in a modern setting. A modern elementary aged audience would appreciate the tale in and of itself; adults may enjoy the retro factor.

*Picture Book*  
*Meredith Bechtel, Student, Kutztown University*

**Flicka, Ricka, Dicka and the Strawberries**


Flicka, Ricka, Dicka are three identical triplets from Sweden. They go on a picnic to pick strawberries for their mother but they end up getting lost. They meet a needy family who helps the little girls get back home. The triplet’s mother pays the girls for the strawberries and the little girls decide that the best use for their earnings is to buy presents for the family that helped them get home. The moral is to help those less fortunate than yourself. This book was originally published in 1946. Because it is a reprint of a vintage book, the illustrations and story are typical of 1940’s and 50’s children’s books. The story is idyllic, the girls a little too sweet, and there is a blatant moral message. However, the themes can be applied in a modern setting. A modern elementary aged audience would appreciate the tale in and of itself; adults may enjoy the retro factor.

*Picture Book*  
*Meredith Bechtel, Student, Kutztown University*

**Flicka, Ricka, Dicka Bake a Cake**


Flicka, Ricka, Dicka are three identical triplets from Sweden. They enlist their aunt to help them bake a cake for their mother’s birthday. They learn how to measure ingredients, mix the batter, fill the cake pan and put the cake in the oven. However, the little girls forget to watch the clock and the cake burns. They learn that baking requires care and they make a second cake just right. Moral-if at first you do not succeed, try try again. This book was originally published in 1955. Because it is a reprint of a vintage book, the illustrations and story are typical of 1940’s and 50’s children’s books. The story is idyllic, the girls a little too sweet, and there is a blatant moral message. However, this story can be applied in a modern setting. It can be used to teach young children about baking and the importance of following directions in the kitchen. A modern elementary aged audience would appreciate the tale in and of itself; adults may enjoy the retro factor.

*Picture Book*  
*Meredith Bechtel, Student, Kutztown University*
**Auntie Yang’s Great Soybean Picnic**


This is a story based on real-life events in the childhood of the author and illustrator. Their parents were Chinese immigrants. Their mother and aunt came over in 1945 to go to college in the United States. They eventually got married and had kids. One sister moved to Indiana and the other to Illinois. One summer Yang (the sister who lived in Illinois) found a soybean farm and the two sisters decided that they should have a picnic. So the two families sat together and enjoyed many soybeans. The next year Aunt Yang invited six Chinese families to join the picnic and year after year the picnic grew bigger and bigger.

There is a lot of information about Chinese culture, including food and some Chinese words. It also helps the reader identify with someone leaving their family for a country that they don’t know, and how a comfort as small as a soybean can make a world of difference. This is an excellent book for teaching about other cultures and it can be paired with *Everybody Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley.

*Non-Fiction*  
*Brittany Lee, Student, Kutztown University*

**Moose n’ Me**


Based on Kenny Loggins’s song titled “Moose n’ Me,” this children’s story lets its readers take part in the adventures with Kenny and his dog, Moose. The story follows the duo through the years until Loggins has to leave to follow his dreams as a musician. While Moose may not be alive anymore, Loggins has created lasting memories with this children’s book. Children who have owned a pet will find reassurance that memories of their pets will love on through Loggins’ story. The story does end with the dog going to heaven. Each page has a large illustration with one sentence. The vocabulary is simple, although Loggins does use dialect with some words such as changing *and* to *n’*. The book can be added to a church, school, or public libraries. Children interested in pets that have passed away may also want to read *Dog Heaven* and *Cat Heaven* by Cynthia Rylant.

*Picture Book*  
*Jessica Serrenti, Student, Kutztown University*
Monkey Colors
With beautifully depicted watercolor and ink, full-page illustrations, large simple text, and one simple fact that is used as a refrain throughout the book, “monkeys come in many colors,” this book is fascinating and appealing, even to someone who doesn’t like monkeys! The book opens with the refrain, “Monkeys come in many colors” and a two-page spread of a jungle containing twelve different monkey types dispersed throughout the vines and floor. Then, introducing monkeys from the South American, African, and Asian continents in groupings of four, one per page, the identical jungle scene is again shown, this time only showing the four newly-introduced monkeys along with the refrain. Four more pages, four more monkeys and the jungle scene with eight monkeys; four more monkeys, four more pages, and the jungle scene with twelve monkeys – panned back to show that it is actually an exhibit in a museum with children observing it! The cleverness of this book’s design makes it compatible for children over a broader grade range. Older children will be intrigued by the actual names of each monkey species printed inconspicuously on the page on which they are introduced, plus the additional information at the book’s end that includes pictures of each monkey, along with one to three interesting informational sentences and a two-page world map showing where each monkey lives and a general paragraph about primates. Younger children will enjoy the repetition of the refrain and seeing each subsequent jungle scene “populated.” The book can also be used for counting and as a look and find for each monkey species.

Nonfiction Picture Book
Gayle R. Heath, Library Director, Tamaqua Public Library

My Beautiful Hippie
Joanne is a teenager living in San Francisco, near the Haight-Ashbury district, in 1967, “The Summer of Love”. She meets a hippie named Martin on the street and their chance encounter begins her infatuation with him and the culture that now surrounds her. There are the typical problems with parents and siblings understanding how she feels about Martin and the places that they go together. In the end, Martin leaves and Joanne is heart-broken, but a stronger, more self-assured young lady. This book reads like every flashback you’ve ever read about, heard about, or experienced. The description of the family dynamics was great, but there were references to some things that students may not be able to make connections to.

Chapter Book: Coming of Age
Gwenn Davis, Librarian, Stroudsburg Jr. High School

The Three Bears ABC: An Alphabet Book
This book is not only an alphabet book but a very bright and colorful retelling of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* story. Usually alphabet books focus on teaching the alphabet without telling a story, but this book has a new letter per page and tells part of the story focusing on a specific letter. The entire alphabet is listed on the endpapers and at the beginning of the story. Each letter is listed and then uses the format, “O is for open. The bears found their front door open. How odd!” Some of the letters are forced such as “X marks the exact spot where she landed.” The book is short but it is the perfect length for an alphabet book and the target audience. Maccarone adds some alliteration to this well-loved tale which makes this endearing classic a great read aloud for elementary schools and public library story times.

Picture Book
Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library
The Incredible Charlotte Sycamore

One summer night in 1876 steampunk London, 16 year old Charlotte Sycamore and her friends were attacked by mechanical dogs during their get-together. To avoid being locked up for rabies, Charlotte takes upon herself to find a cure for the rabies and solve the mystery of the mechanical dogs - all while trying to juggle her life as the daughter of Queen Victoria’s royal surgeon. This story is a Sherlock Holmes meets Robin Hood story in an alternative history London. Readers of action-packed stories will be pleased with this story.

Chapter Book; Mystery

*Nikki Rodolico, Page, Horsham Township Library*

Bats: Biggest! Littlest!

Part of a series of books (Biggest! Littlest!), this most recent publication features bats from around the world in extraordinarily colorful and detailed photography. The variety of size, specially adapted body parts, and habits for each bat type are explored in relation to what it eats and how it survives in its own special environment. There are many amazing and interesting facts presented in the easily-read text and in the color-boxed captioning for photographs. Honduran White Bats make a tent from a large banana leaf that they use for shelter and protection, and the Spix’s Disk-Winged Bat has a suction-cup-like disk at the base of each thumb that it uses to attach itself to the underside of a leaf. The largest of the bats - the gray-headed flying fox, is shown next to a woman for comparison and also describes the size of the wingspan as “slightly longer than the average bathtub” to firmly cement a visual and mental picture of the bat’s size. The same is accomplished for the smallest bat. The book concludes with a two-page world map that shows the location for each photographed bat, and a glossary, bibliography, and list of websites for further information about bats. This book would serve as a wonderful companion to the fictional Brian Lies bat books (*Bats at the Beach*, *Bats at the Library*, etc.) to initiate conversations about fact and fiction or to discuss bat habits for adaptation and survival.

Nonfiction

*Gayle R. Heath, Library Director, Tamaqua Public Library*

The Long, Long Journey: The Godwit’s Amazing Migration

The bar-tailed godwit is a large shore bird that begins life in Alaska. In the fall, the godwit migrates to New Zealand, a seven thousand mile trip that takes almost 8 days of nonstop flight. Markle chronicles the birth and migration of one particular godwit chick. Through this chick’s story, readers come to understand the perils of flying through unfamiliar skies. While the story of the godwit is amazing, the beauty of this book lies in the illustrations. Posada’s artwork combines watercolor and collage to bring the mudflats of Alaska to life. Textured papers give the illustrations a rich three-dimensionality. The paper used to create the godwit chicks is very feathery, conveying the chick’s nearly weightless fragility. Markle provides a page of additional facts, along with a list of resources for further research. An author’s note details the godwit’s particular significance to Markle, a native of New Zealand who lives near the godwit’s temporary home. While this title could be useful for research, its great strength is in inspiring awe and wonder about a bird with which students may not be familiar.

Picture Book; Nonfiction

*Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster*
Snow School
This fictional story goes through the life of a brother and sister snow leopard cubs and their adventures to adulthood. It starts out with them being helpless, and learning various life lessons such as how to be careful of other animals. The story informs the reader of how they play and build muscle by doing so. The book informs the reader on how the mother gets their food and how she teaches them to hunt as well. The cubs learn various lessons until they are old enough to survive on their own without the help of their mother. The author does a good job describing the situation and how the cubs learn each lesson, even if it is the hard way. There was a tremendous amount of interesting information that could be obtained by reading this story and it gives an almost all together accurate account of snow leopards growing up. The illustrations are fabulous, and they will help the readers get into the story more as the large amount of information can make it hard at times. Overall, this was a cute story that I am sure many children will enjoy reading.

Nonfiction

The Little Gray Bunny
Once there was a little gray bunny who had to do all the chores in preparation for Easter. He had to weave the baskets, mold the jelly beans, and collect all the eggs to name just a few chores. When the little gray bunny finds hundreds of new eggs ready to be colored and hidden, he needs all the help he can find. But the lamb, turtle, and duck think they are far too busy to help him. McGrath’s adaptation of ‘The Little Red Hen” can be used as a supplement in church libraries to teach children the benefits of helping others. This book can also be placed in a public library. Kim’s watercolor illustrations fill the pages with color. Each page has one or two sentences with simple vocabulary. Children who like these two story plots will also enjoy McGrath’s The Little Green Witch for Halloween.

Picture Book

Lulu and the Dog from the Sea
This adorable book is the second in a series about a young, seven-year-old girl named Lulu who loves animals. She has many pets, but is always on the lookout for additions to her fur family- or at least, for animals to show compassion to! In this book, Lulu goes on vacation with her family and her cousin, Mellie. Upon arriving at the cottage by the sea, the family finds out that there is a mysterious dog that lurks around, stealing food from people’s trash cans. Lulu is determined to find the dog from the sea and befriend him. In the end, the dog from the sea turns up in an unexpected way. Young readers will be on the edge of their seats wondering how the friendship between Lulu and the dog from the sea will turn out. Will the dog from the sea trust her? Will the adults accept him? Will she get to bring him home and save him from being unwanted? This book is recommended as an introduction to chapter books for animal lovers.

Chapter Book; Fiction

Emily L. Hershey, Academic Coach, Agora Cyber Charter School
**Elmer and the Birthday Quake**


Elmer, the patchwork elephant is back again. But this time, he and his friends help other elephants on a very special day. Olds 100th birthday! He and his other pink elephants are causing a ruckus on their clearing in the jungle. Every time the pink elephants would say happy birthday, they would stomp and yell a number. But, since they are so strong, they didn't expect what happened next. McKee is a wonderful writer who helps children to realize the importance of friends and the way we should live our lives: to the fullest every day.

*Picture Book*  

Kaitlyn Verdon, Student, Kutztown University

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**Eight Days Gone**


This picture book depicts the first space shuttle launch to the moon in 1969. The story begins with describing the launch and then follows the mission until the astronauts return home. It is written in rhyming verse with only a few lines per page, which speaks to a young audience. The words used to describe the mission are descriptive and full of imagery. A follow up author’s note at the end goes into more detail about the space mission and the crew of astronauts that were aboard the space shuttle. A bibliography is also included, which includes websites that may be appropriate for children to use to learn more about the first United States space shuttle launch. This book would be a great introduction to the topic of space but more information could be supplemented using the bibliography websites. The illustrations match the text and are whimsically drawn with much detail included. Rich vocabulary is used throughout the verse to provide many talking points and lesson on synonyms and descriptive language as well as visualization.

*Picture Book, Nonfiction*  

Tiffany Yehl, 5th grade teacher, PA Leadership Charter School

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**Pluto Visits Earth**


Pluto is distraught when he receives the news that Earth’s astronomers have decided he is not a real planet. Upset, Pluto decides to journey to Earth to plead his case. He asks his fellow planets to come along and support him but no one is willing to join him. When he arrives at the Mount Baldy Observatory, he asks the astronomers why they say he cannot be a planet anymore. They explain their scientific reasoning but Pluto is very upset. He loves being a part of the nine planets of the solar system and is afraid he will become forgotten. Lucky for him a young boy assures Pluto that no matter what the scientists say he will always be his favorite. The text of the book is simple and fun making it perfect to use with young children. Lee’s colorful pen and ink illustrations are enjoyable, a bit silly, and great addition to the Metzger’s text. Although the young children might not get all of the humor in Pluto’s plight their parents and teachers will certainly appreciate it.

*Picture Book*  

Mandalee Flannery, Student, Kutztown University
**Eddie Gets Ready for School**  

Eddie is a playful boy who is trying to get himself ready for school. He makes a checklist as he goes, and luckily, as he drinks a post-breakfast root beer and tries to pack his cat for show and tell, his mother steps in to redirect him when need be. Underwear in hand, and armed with an entire watermelon for snack time, Eddie makes it to the bus just on time. Text consists entirely of Eddie’s morning checklist. One must pay attention to the illustrations to get the full story. Early elementary students will recognize Eddie’s enthusiasm for independence and will be reassured by his inconsistent success. Milgrim’s simple, cartoonish illustrations add to the light-hearted sense of fun. Readers must not miss the lists on the endpapers. They are as entertaining as the main text and encourage the reader to imagine Eddie’s further morning antics. This title is an excellent choice for read aloud, but will be equally popular with beginning readers who will be eager to read it again and again.

*Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster*

**Big River’s Daughter**  
Gr. 5-9.

It is 1811, and River Filliam’s river pirate father disappears after an earthquake. She’s on the run from buccaneers who want his fame and his treasures. She’s taken hostage by Jean Lafitte, who tries to change who she is at heart, simply put, a river rat. But soon River gets taken in by notorious pirate queen, Annie Christmas, and her six sons. Along with the young tiger River rescues, River, Annie, and her songs take on an adventure to defeat the group of buccaneers. This book was full of adventure! I love that Miller’s made-up characters and people from history are interacting in this story.

*Shelby Foster, Student, Kutztown University*

**Cookie the Walker**  

Cookie is a dog who has learned how to walk on her two hind legs! She thinks this is just great because she can reach things (like the candy dish), but her friend Kevin is skeptical. When a dog trainer sees her and offers her treats to be in her dog show, Cookie can’t refuse and she is a hit. Next, a circus owner offers her treats to be in the circus, and then a Hollywood agent offers her treats to be a star of her own show. Soon, Cookie is exhausted and not having much fun, so Kevin suggests that she just go back to walking on four legs and come home, which she does. Occasionally, she still stands on two legs, but only when she wants to reach the candy dish when no one is around. The clever dialog and funny illustrations make this a very entertaining story that will have kids laughing out loud. Kevin is the voice of reason throughout the story and children will learn that material rewards are not always worth the consequences. Highly recommended.

*Amber Sams, Librarian, Saucon Valley High School*
**Lucky Ducklings**

Based on a true story that took place in Long Island this book is about a duck rescue by the Montauk Fire Department. The ducks’ names are Mama Duck, Pippin, Bippin, Tippin, Dippin, and Little Joe. Mama Duck decides it is time to leave the park and go to the town. The ducklings follow their mama, but as they waddle the ducklings fall into a storm drain. Mama Duck will not let anyone get near the storm drain. Perry uses a cable from his pick-up truck to lift the grate off the drain. Paul, a firefighter, goes down into the drain to rescue the ducklings. Then Joe, another firefighter, carries the ducklings in a bucket across the street while firefighter Dennis directs traffic. Finally, the ducks arrive at the little pond in the park. There is a note at the beginning that reassures readers that the storm drain has been replaced with smaller openings. Even though the illustrations are done in charcoal and digital media to look like watercolors the story is reminiscent of *Make Way for Ducklings*. This book is fairly short and is great because it is a true story, but the Caldecott Award winning book, *Make Way for Ducklings*, is a much better read aloud. This book could be used as a read aloud to honor firefighters and fire safety month.

*Picture Book*  
Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library

**Great Choice, Camille!**

This title is part of Murphy’s *I See I Learn* series. Each of the titles includes friends Camille, Freda, Ajay, Emma, Percy and Carlos emphasizing either a social, emotional, health & safety, or cognitive skill. This title focuses on Camille’s choice at school to either build a kite or plant a vegetable. The stories are short which will hold the attention of young children while allowing for discussion points with early elementary students. Other titles reviewed include *Left, Right, Emma*; *Percy’s Neighborhood*; and *Happy, Healthy Ajay*. Recommended.

*Picture Book*  
Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School

**Freda Stops a Bully**

This simple and colorful picture book teaches great lesson on bullying. Being an issue in many schools throughout the country, this text would be excellent to use with primary students. Within the story, the character Freda is being made fun of by another character Max because of the color shoes she wears. Freda loves her shoes, but after being ridiculed by Max each day she decides not to wear them anymore and seeks help because of this bully. Throughout the story as Freda is asking for help to deal with the bully, the author highlights the important steps that the reader should take if indeed they are being bullied. The book is very simple, attractive and teaches a very common lesson on bullying. At the end of story, there are also discussion questions and activities listed to make text-to-self connections.

*Picture Book; Fiction*  
Nicole Stratchko, Kindergarten Teacher, Willow Lane Elementary
H.O.R.S.E: A Game of Basketball and Imagination

An inner-city basketball game is turned into a game of imagination as two friends challenge each other on the court. It’s a game where one person shoots a shot and the other player has to shoot the same shot, or else that player gets a letter. Spell “horse” and it’s “Giddy-up, you’re out.” Although the game starts out with skyhooks and half-court shots, it evolves into an imaginary series of shots that are flying over buildings and oceans, into space and finally into the hoop. And one can even dunk the ball with his tongue. According to the author's note, the main characters are he and his friend, Kambui, as kids. The bold paintings laced with text that spirals along with each “shot” depict not only a game of basketball but also a game of friendship and imagination. Readers ages 5 and up will enjoy exploring the illustrations and trying to come up with their own imaginary shots. Myers received a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award honor for this book in 2013.

Children’s Book; Picture Book

Eloise Long, Professor of Library Science, Kutztown University

Ostrich and Lark

Although Ostrich and Lark enjoy spending their days together, Ostrich seems to resent the songs of the many birds and, in particular that of his friend, Lark. Lark enjoys flickering his wings and singing the day away, but Ostrich remains silent. That is, until the day when he stretches his graceful neck and is able to boom like thunderheads on the horizon. Lark is wowed. It’s a story about friendship and supporting each other through the bad times and celebrating the good.

Nelson’s lyrical text is accompanied by vibrant oil paintings that depict the realities of life in the veld of southern Africa. From the dusty months of thirst to the promise of the green season, elementary readers of all ages will learn more about the flora and fauna of this region.

Nelson collaborated with San artists who are members of the Kuro Art Project of Botswana to create this book. The Kuru Art Project is part of a family of organizations dedicated to empowering the Kung San with cultural revival and modern survival techniques.

Children’s; Cultural

Eloise Long, Professor of Library Science, Kutztown University
Series: First Step Nonfiction – Tools at Work


Young children are fascinated with tools and their uses. Lerner Publishing’s “First Step Nonfiction: Tools at Work” series addresses this fascination head on with a collection of books about simple construction tools. Close-up color photos of the tools in action enhance the simple text. Text and photos work together to explain each tool’s use, to show how it is held, and to define different parts. For example, in “What Does A Hammer Do?,” the handle, head and claw are all shown in close-up and in action. The photos are accompanied by an explanation of what makes each part important. Photos show the tools in use by men, women and children, all wearing appropriate safety gear. Backmatter includes a glossary and an index, a double page spread given over to a more in-depth explanation of the physics behind the tool’s use, and a section called “Safety First” in which general safety rules are outlined along with safety rules specific to the tool. The main appeal will be as an instructional read aloud to preschool or kindergarten, making the glossary and index seem unnecessary. The titles in this series are solid choices for early childhood classrooms, particularly those in a Montessori setting where classrooms may include working tool benches.

*Nonfiction*  
*Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster*

I Am Albert Einstein


Part of Norwich’s “I Am” series, this chapter book gives upper elementary or middle-level students a nice biography about Albert Einstein. All of the books in the series start out with a one-page introduction told in first person from the subject of the book. The rest of the biography is in third person. She includes the major life events, glimpses into his thinking and his research, his personal life, and his involvement in World War II. At the end of the book, Norwich includes a list of “10 Things You Should Know about Einstein” and “10 More Things that are Pretty Cool to Know.” She also includes Internet links for places to visit related to Einstein, a small bibliography for other books students can read, a glossary, and an index. Simon’s sketched illustrations added just the right visuals for this jam-packed biography. Students will enjoy reading this book to learn more about Einstein, but they could also use it as a research source thanks to the nice index. I highly recommend this book to public and school libraries.

*Biography/Chapter Book*  
*Karen J. Wanamaker, Outreach Librarian, Kutztown University of Pa.*
**I Am George Washington**


This book is part of the *I Am* series which includes books on Harriet Tubman, Helen Keller, Albert Einstein, and many more. The book begins with an introduction of George Washington followed by summaries of people who you will meet in the story and a time line of events. I think these are great features because they prepare the reader for what will the story will be like. The book covers George Washington's entire life while remaining relatively short and readable for a 3rd grade student. The book is told in 1st person point of view so the reader really feels like they are part of the story. The pictures and the charts really help to illustrate what is going on in the story. I particularly enjoy the section at the end of the book called “Ten Things You Should Know About” because it gives you more facts in smaller chunks. The information is well researched and for $6 a book I would recommend picking several of these up for a unit on famous people.

**Biography**

Andrew Boyer, PA State Employee

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**The Magician’s Tower**


The book is the sequel to the *Wizard of Dark Street*. Oona Crate is a wizard's apprentice who has a side job as a detective. In the second book in the series, Oona must compete in the annual Wizard’s Tower competition which has never been completed. At the start of the competition, Oona discovers that a magical punch bowl has been stolen from a fortune teller. Oona must complete the riddles and challenges of the contest while trying to search for the missing punch bowl. Oona Crate makes a great female heroine because even though the setting is fantasy, the character is easy to relate to. I would recommend reading the first book in the series both because it is a great read and because it helps the reader to understand the back story of the characters. The book is well written, roller coast ride with a huge surprise twist. If you like this book, I would recommend *Children of the Red King*, by Jenny Nimmo, or *Fablehaven*, by Brandon Mull.

**Fantasy**

Andrew Boyer, PA State Employee

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**Forest, What Would You Like?**


Would someone have ever thought that the forest around us has feelings? Well it does. It likes the summer sun and flowers. It likes raspberry bushes and slugs. It likes crispy tree needles and leaves that turn colors. It likes icy rivers and snow. It likes cool breezes and bees buzzing. But most importantly, it loves children lingering and having fun. This wonderful book goes through every season in the point of view of the forest and how much it loves the changes it goes through. This book would be great for beginning readers, especially on Earth Day.

**Picture Book**

Kaitlyn Verdon, Student, Kutztown University

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Andrew Boyer, PA State Employee

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The Kindhearted Crocodile

The kindhearted crocodile has everything he needs to be fearsome: big teeth, powerful jaws, and a strong body. Being fearsome does not matter to the kindhearted crocodile, though. He just wants to be part of a family. To prove his kindheartedness, the crocodile plans to enter a house during the night and do nice things for a family. Things hardly go as planned, however. The kindhearted crocodile was certainly not expecting the family’s reaction to finding a crocodile in their home.

A lighthearted tale about a misunderstood crocodile, Panzieri’s book embodies the phrase, “things aren’t always what they seem.” The kindhearted crocodile is a lovable character who proves that being kind to others is often the best approach in life. Accompanying Panzieri’s story are the illustrations of AntonGionata Ferrari, a unique combination of photographs, inked lines, and splashes of color. These vibrant illustrations bring the story to life, enhancing the story of the crocodile and his friends. Between the fun storyline and beautiful illustration style, it is not hard to enjoy following the crocodile as he searches for acceptance.

Mooshka: A Quilt Story

In this story Karla names her colorful quilt Mooshka. The quilt is Karla’s friend who keeps her warm and safe at night, and says, “sweet dreams.” Karla is woken up in the morning when the quilt says, “pancakes.” Karla’s grandmother sews the quilt for her while telling stories about the pieces that were added. Later on the quilt tells Karla of those same stories over and over until Karla falls asleep. The stories are about how the pieces, or schnitz, were once fabric of a tablecloth, play tent, kerchief, cape, curtains, Halloween costume, and pajamas. Each piece is special to a different family member. Then one night the quilt stops talking to Karla when Karla’s baby sister Hannah moves into Karla’s room. Karla speaks to the quilt and the quilt keeps silent. Hannah starts to cry and cry so to stop her crying Karla puts the quilt over Hannah. The quilt responds by saying, “sister” and Hannah stops crying. Karla starts to tell her sister stories about the quilt pieces. The colorful quilt outlines each page of the warm and happy story. The book’s storyline is somewhat odd because the quilt talks to the girl instead of the girl talking to the quilt. The story would have been better if it was about Karla remembering the stories her grandmother told her and then Karla passing down those stories to her children. Also, the title is strange as well because it leads you to believe that Mooshka is the nickname of a person. This book could be used for story times about sharing, siblings, and a new baby being born into a family. A better quilt story for a read aloud would be Patricia Polacco’s *The Keeping Quilt*.

I Funny: A Middle School Story

Middle-school student Jamie Grimm has set his goal to become the world’s greatest stand-up comedian. Jamie doesn’t let his wheelchair or his new situation living with his aunt, uncle, and cousin stand in his way. He focuses on winning the Planet’s Funniest Kid Comic Contest. Are Jamie’s jokes really funny? Find out for yourself in this book which will surely appeal to tweens and teens.

Humor
Sharon Breeden, Literacy Specialist, McCaskey High School
**Chipmunk’s Hole**


Chipmunks are adorable and this title has the photos to prove it! Part of an informational series by Bearport, “The Hole Truth!: Underground Animal Life,” *Chipmunk’s Hole* opens with a clear, close-up photo of a chipmunk peeking out of his home. Each double page spread is labeled with a descriptive heading. The excellent photos are labeled and provide good support to the text. Topics include the chipmunk’s burrowing habits, adaptations for burrowing, predators, diet, infancy, and winter behavior. Text features included bolded words that can be found in the glossary, maps of the eastern chipmunk’s habitat, a diagram of a burrow, text boxes with additional facts, and critical thinking questions that encourage interaction with the text. Backmatter includes a glossary, index, a bibliography for further reading, and a link to additional information on the Bearport website. Great for early elementary animal research, this title will also have high appeal for early readers who enjoy reading about cute animals.

Nonfiction

*Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster*

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**The Case of the Incapacitated Capitals**


Capital letters come to life in this picture book by Robin Pulver! The story starts off with the capital letters moaning and in pain. They are saying that they want to do their job (they explain what that is) but that the students are not using them correctly. For example, the students write a letter to their Principal and they do not use any capital letters in it. Now the capital letters are in a lot of pain and the medics need to come in because of the maltreatment. This is a fun story that students can really get into. Throughout the story, Pulver uses color every time a capital letter appears in his writing. At the end of the story, there are some reference pages with information on why capital letters are also called upper case letters, rules to follow when using capital letters, and a page on ‘what to capitalize in a letter’. Read this book and find out if the capital letters are saved via the students!

Picture Book

*Andrea Siegfried*

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**Picture a Tree**


Picture a book about a tree. It may be poetic or factual; a book about planting or about the seasons. Now picture a book about divergent thinking. It may ask you to picture a tree, but it will also ask you to think outside the tree. Reid’s book about a tree is an exercise in creativity. How many different things can a tree be? A tree is a home and a clubhouse and a friend. A tree is a symbol of change and of growth. Reid’s metaphors and observations are supported and extended by colorful illustrations. Reid creates illustrations by layering Plasticine shapes on illustration board and photographing the resulting pictures. One can only imagine the time and care that went into each finely detailed double page spread. This title is a beautiful ode to trees, but would also serve as a wonderful tool for encouraging children to take the time to look carefully at the ordinary objects in the world around us.

Picture Book

*Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster*
Canary in the Coal Mine

Bitty is a small canary who is used to danger. She detects deadly gasses in West Virginia coal mines during the Depression. Bitty is tired of always being in danger, so she goes off on an adventure to find help. She meets two men: a state senator, and the inventor of an amazing machine that can replace canaries in coal mines! But when they return to Bitty’s hometown, there has been a terrible mining accident that affects Bitty’s human and canary friends! I like the use of the canary as the main character in this story. I did find it a bit depressing though, learning what Bitty and other canaries had to go through in the mines.

Adventure, Animal Story, Fiction

Shelby Foster, Student, Kutztown University

I Scream Ice Cream!: A Book of Wordles

Rosenthal, who is known for her book, *Duck! Rabbit!*, has again written a fun read aloud. This time her book is a collection of wordles. As defined at the beginning of the book, “wordles are groups of words that sound exactly the same but mean different things.” Bloch’s ink drawings with collage and block prints add humor to these homophone wordplays. Some of the wordles are difficult such as “me, cloud” and “meek loud” while others are very simple: “reindeer” and “rain, dear”. Some of the wordles should not have been included such as, “sorry, no more funnel cakes” and “sorry, no more fun... elk aches”. Each wordle is represented on one page with the answer revealed on the next page. Some children would get frustrated by the wordles, but the humor supplied by the book will outlast the frustration. This short book encourages brainstorming and for children to create their own wordles with illustrations. Teachers could pair this book with the game Mad Gab.

Picture Book

Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library

Exclamation Mark!

Exclamation Mark never felt that he fit in with the other punctuation marks, specifically the periods. He was always different. That is until he meets Question Mark and realizes that he has the power to exclaim! Children and adults alike will enjoy this clever story about punctuation with underlying themes of individuality. This book is highly recommended for an elementary library or classroom.

Picture Book

Megan Phibbs, Librarian, Washington Elementary
**Wumbers**

What do you get when you combine a word and a number – a “wumber,” of course. Each double spread presents a situation in which characters speak in wumbers. The cover presents two children shouting, “It’s a book! It’s a game!” and the text throughout feels like a contest between the two children to see who can come up with the cleverest word and number combinations. With each page turn, bright, bold illustrations add to the increasing sense of triumph. The sense of “one-up-manship” is strong enough to carry the reader through the book, despite there being no narrative. A dedication cites William Steig’s, *c d b l*, as inspiration, but the book must give a nod to text-messaging as an influence as well. Few books present wordplay with such glee; even readers who are not normally drawn to this type of humor will appreciate the enthusiasm of the presentation. The clever combinations will inspire readers to try to create their own wumbers. Classroom teachers will find this title helpful for teaching brainstorming and creative thinking.

*Picture Book*

**Here Come the Humpbacks!**

This book tells the migration story of a mother humpback whale and her calf as they travel from the warm waters on the Caribbean, where they spent the winter, up to the colder waters off of New England to feed in the summer, and then back again. Along their journey, they come into contact with other humpback whales, whale-watching boats, larger ships, and some unfriendly orca whales. On each page there is an extra side paragraph that gives more factual and scientific information highlighting some aspect of the humpback whale’s life. This is a nice feature as readers get both an engaging story and scientific information that explains the situation in more detail, which makes the book attractive to both younger and older readers. The illustrations are beautiful and depict the whales in many different environments. Recommended.

*Nonthion; Picture Book*

**Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster**

**Amber Sams, Librarian, Saucon Valley High School**
**Double Trouble**

*Vordak the Incomprehensible: Double Trouble* is the third entry in the “Vordak The incomprehensible” series. The book’s format includes many pictures and occasionally dips into a more abstract writing style when characters are talking to one another, where each line of spoken dialogue is placed next to a picture of the speaker to denote who is speaking. The fourth wall is non-existent and the reader occasionally interacts with Vordak during the story. The story is illustrated in a black and white comic style during particularly comedic or intense moments. In this adventure, Vordak the Incomprehensible once again finds himself envying his rival in villainy, The Blue Buzzard, and his son, for being the winners of an annual father-son picnic for villains. Soon he realizes that if he were to clone his perfect self that there is no way the two of them could lose. Hiring a pair of twin scientists, both named Fred, he soon has a clone of his own. Soon after losing the father-son competition a problem arises in that his clone isn’t as villainous as his “father”. Vordak takes it upon himself and an increasing number of Freds to create a machine that will remove the goodness from his clone, allowing him to properly follow in his creator’s footsteps. Soon it turns out, however, that the son’s goodness was but an act to divert Vordak’s attention as he built an army of robots to destroy him. Unfortunately, like the original, it is all for naught as he follows in the original’s footsteps more than he realizes. A fun read it is full of illustrations and simple reading, making it an excellent book for beginners.

*Chapter Book; Humor*  
*Joseph Wenzel, Student, Kutztown University*

**Lincoln’s Grave Robbers**

During and after the Civil War, counterfeiting was big business. It is said that more fake money was circulating in the United States than real money at this time. Skilled engravers were at the head of large counterfeiting rings that spread their incredibly realistic fake money throughout the entire country. At this time the Secret Service was in charge of tracking down the leaders and engravers of the counterfeiting rings. They managed to catch the country’s best engravers, crippling the largest counterfeiting ring in the Midwest, led by James Kennally. In turn Kennally comes up with a plan to steal the late president Lincoln’s body and ransom it to the government for a large sum of money as well as the release of his jailed engraver. This incredible true tale from our country’s history is remarkable and suspenseful as written by Sheinkin. Readers will forget that they are reading nonfiction as the text reads much more like a fast paced historical crime thriller. Students who are reluctant to read nonfiction will find this book much easier to read and much more exciting than their dry history textbooks. The text also includes short character descriptions, a glossary, an index, and a “Body Snatcher Bonus Section.”

*Nonfiction*  
*Mandalee Flannery, Student, Kutztown University*
About Habitats: Oceans

This book is filled with facts about oceans including characteristics of the ocean, animals that live in the ocean, and ways that people use the ocean. It is written in simple sentences, often only a few per page, that discuss one fact about the ocean. The text is written on the left hand page and is accompanied by a detailed illustration on the right hand page. Each colorful illustration is given a number and caption that labels what is shown in the picture as well as which ocean it is depicting. At the end of the book, the author has included a thorough description of each picture that was in the book, which includes a thumbnail of the picture and a paragraph explaining in more detail what is being shown. This adds more depth to the facts that are presented about the ocean habitat for children who want to learn more. A glossary of terms and a bibliography are also included to provide the reader with even more resources and information about oceans. This book is part of a wonderful series of “About...” books that are nonfiction books about many different topics. These are highly informative books that are wonderful for young readers.

Picture Book, Nonfiction

Tiffany Yehl, 5th grade teacher, PA Leadership Charter School

You Are My Baby: Safari

Two books within one are combined in this playful and softly colored board book of mother and baby animals. Toddlers will enjoy interacting with the book repeatedly due to its design as an interactive puzzle matching parent and child. The simple text describes one important aspect of the giraffe, crocodile, monkey, elephant, and lion as they go through the day. Each animal is portrayed in its natural habitat and encourages the reader to go beyond the text to explain more about the animal to toddlers. The baby lion curling up to sleep at the end reminds us that the day is done. As a gift to a new baby, the book will delight throughout the first few years. Unlike many mother and baby animal books, the interactive design of this text makes it unique.

Board Book: Nonfiction

Nancy E. Cardenuto, Asst. Prof., Kutztown University

Seymour Simon’s Extreme Oceans

Imagine being immersed in details that make a reader feel as though they are in the sea exploring it first-hand. Simon takes his reader on a journey of the oceans in this well written book with breathtaking pictures and interesting facts. Simon gives information on ocean animals, ocean weather, climate change, the Great Barrier Reef, and more. The book is divided into chapter such as these, and a good number of them start off with Simon painting a picture for the reader (imagine yourself sitting on a blanket with the breeze blowing as you watch the ocean’s waves crash onto the beach). This will draw the reader in and make them feel as though they are a part of the story, and will be engaged for the rest of the chapter. This book can of course be used for information on oceans, and could also be used as a mentor text for writing. Students can hear Simon ‘paint a picture’ with details and use it to create their own detailed writing. Come explore the ocean and find out answers about the tallest wave, the largest blue whale, the 12,000 mile journey of a leatherneck sea turtle, and much more!

Nonfiction

Andrea Siegfried
Under Shifting Glass

Twelve-year-old Jess is torn when her Great Aunt Evie passes away. Aunt Evie leaves Jess an old desk. Jess is not too fond of it, until she finds something miraculous and magical inside. She finds a small flask in a hidden compartment of the desk. It seems as if there is something inside it, something alive. The strange substance inside seems to glow. When Jess and her family find out that her mother is pregnant with twins, everyone is excited for the two new arrivals. But, when they get word that something is wrong with the twins, Jess’s magic flask loses its glow. Does the bottle have something to do with her infant twin brothers? I enjoyed this book and the sense of magic and wonder it gave me while reading. Jess learns that sometimes things happen in life that we don’t understand, but there is always hope, and perhaps, even magic.

Coming of Age, Drama, Fiction

Shelby Foster, Student, Kutztown University

Something to Prove: The Great Satchel Paige vs. Rookie Joe Dimaggio

The year is 1936 and Satchel Paige is a dynamic pitcher in the Negro League. His variety of pitches leaves batters in the dust. There is a newcomer that the Yankees are looking at, a rookie by the name of Joe Dimaggio. In order to see whether or not Joe could play in the major league, the general manager for the Yankees sets up a game with Satchel Paige’s team. As expected, Satchel throws many amazing pitches but in the ninth inning Joe hits one that wins the game. He ends up becoming one of the greatest players to ever play for the Yankees. This book tells the story of segregated teams and the way baseball was played during that time. Cooper, the illustrator, does a fine job of exaggerating the player’s features so that you know what they are thinking or feeling. This book could be paired with Teammates, a book about Jackie Robinson and Pee Wee Reese.

Free download of complimentary resources are available for this book.

Picture Book: Historical Fiction

Gwenn Davis, Librarian, Stroudsburg Jr. High School

The House that George Built

Shortly after George Washington took office, he was charged with building a house for future presidents. A former surveyor, he oversaw the building project with an eye for detail. According to this well-researched story, he even helped drive the stakes that marked the foundation. As the title suggests, the text echoes the rhyme and rhythm of the nursery rhyme, “The House that Jack Built.” The rhyming text is in bold and highlights key moments in planning and construction as described in further detail in smaller print on the facing page. The first page of a double page spread might have a six-sentence paragraph about the contest George held to find the best architectural design for the house. The text on the facing page adds one sentence to the cumulative rhyme: “This is the design that would stand for all time.” The text is overlaid on light-hearted, yet detailed watercolor illustrations that support both styles of text. There are a lot of interesting details worked into the short picture book format. An author’s note provides rich and interesting information to supplement the text, and a section at the back, “The Changing President’s House” highlights some of the ways that other presidents changed or added to the White House and its grounds. Sources are listed, along with a more kid-friendly list of “Resources to Learn More.” Recommended.

Picture Book; Nonfiction

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster
Barnaby and the Bedbug Detective

This book is an adorable fiction story about a dog that longs to be a hero and goes about it in his own way. Told from Barnaby’s point of view the story starts out with him being discouraged because he is just a dog at a shelter. A family comes but because he is so excited, they think he is too wild. One day, a woman named Martha picks him out and takes him. She takes him to her work were she explains what bedbugs are to Barnaby and that he will help her catch them and he goes to bedbug-sniffing school. At bedbug-sniffing school he learns how to catch the scent of bedbugs and is rewarded when he find them. Together he and Martha become a team. After that, they go to various places, but Barnaby does not find any bedbugs. Then they go to the family that has been having problems and being bitten. Barnaby finds bedbugs throughout the house. Barnaby figures out that he is a different kind of hero. He is a hero who helps with bedbugs. This story is thrilling and exciting and overall an excellent written book. The story teaches children in preK-3 grade that there are different kinds of hero and that everyone can be one. It gives a good message and the illustrations help enhance the story line and draw the reader into this adorable story. It’s a story that when compared to other works of fiction for children will really stand out as a book that helps children understand that they can be special. This book is a book that will inspire the readers to be themselves and become their own heroes whatever their specialty.

Nonfiction

Nobody Asked the Pea

Hans Christian Andersen’s The Princess and the Pea is retold with humorous characters and soft watercolors. Each character provides his or her own point of view of the story including Patrick, the pea. Like so many queen mothers, Queen Mildred is nagging her son, Prince Harold, to get married and have grandchildren who will become the future heirs. Prince Harold has other ideas and likes his bachelor status. King Henry bows to his, wife, Queen Mildred’s plans for a pile of mattresses and a pea. Just like his son King Henry is only focused on hunting. Even minor characters are included such as Mother Mouse, the new head housekeeper, Roger (the doorman), and Princess Tina’s maid. Queen Mildred’s plan seems to work when Princess Tina sleeps soundly on the pile of mattresses on top of the pea. Then one rainy night, Princess Lucy arrives with her page. She also sleeps on the mountain of mattresses but cannot sleep because of the pea. When the queen finds this out she happily plans the wedding between Princess Lucy and Prince Harold. The couple goes on a hunting honeymoon and the story ends with Patrick the pea staying in a display case where Queen Mildred’s grandchildren can view him at the royal museum. The book is a bit long with each character having multiple pages only focusing on their point of view. Not only will children learn about character and point of view but they can compare and contrast this book with the original fairy tale.

Picture Book

Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library
Fabulous Fishes


Not every picture book makes a good board book, but Stockdale’s gorgeous pairing of text and illustrations is a perfect choice for reissue in the sturdier format. First published in 2008, the original offered many elements of a good board book: clear illustration, simple text, and the sort of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition that encourage a child to “read” along. The original text is unabridged in the board book. The internal rhymes, paired with rhyming couplets, and a clear, bouncing rhythm, contributed to the picture book’s success as a read aloud. The bright and colorful illustrations are all maintained, though not always in exactly the same format. In the picture book, each third illustration was presented in a double-page, full-bleed spread. These double page illustrations gave a strong punch to the text and served to slow the reader; they encouraged a pause after each “line” of a couplet. In the new format, these double illustrations are reworked to fit in a single page, within a frame. Though the impact of the double-page illustrations is lost in this format, the rhyme and rhythm are strong enough that most readers will still find the natural line breaks. Some other elements of the original picture book are not included in the board book: a bibliography of non-fiction books about fish for further reading, and names and facts for each of the fish pictured in the body of the book. The intended audience will not miss the backmatter. They will enjoy holding the board book and “reading” to themselves. This is an excellent selection for any preschool classroom or library serving the very young.

Board Book

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster

It’s Raining, It’s Pouring


The lyrics of the timeless Peter, Paul and Mary song, “It’s Raining,” are pictured through breezy illustrations of a family making the most of a rainy day. Davenier interprets the song using a day at Grandma and Grandpa’s to show how different nursery rhymes are combined to create a gentle, almost-lullaby.

While most of the grandchildren find a way to entertain themselves indoors on a rainy day, the littlest grandchild sits in bed with grandpa (presumably the old man who bumped his head) as he reads nursery rhymes to her. These scenes are interspersed with images of the children’s hide and seek game. At the end of the book, the rain stops, grandpa’s head isn’t hurting, and all the children are gathered in the bed. The illustrations reflect the shift at the end of the song to a major tonality.

The book includes a CD with a classic recording of the song, and the music endures, even after 50 years. This reviewer used the book and recording as a calming final song in early childhood music classes, and the youngest children enjoyed the calm folk music while the older children enjoyed seeing familiar characters throughout the book. If used in a small-group or one-on-one setting, reading the lyrics would be appropriate for literacy studies using phrasing and rhyming words.

Because of the story-telling nature of the words and the transitions from one nursery rhyme to another, this book is not the best choice for a sing along. However, it does open up opportunity to discuss the illustrations and text as a single entity. Elementary classroom and music libraries would benefit from having this book, a thoughtful new interpretation of a classic song.

Picture Book

Carrie T. Kreider, Graduate, Kutztown University
Red Knit Cap Girl
Red Knit Cap Girl desperately wants to talk to the moon. She, her little white rabbit, and her enchanted animal friends in the forest try to figure out a way to get the moon’s attention and eventually plan a party to encourage the moon to reach down to earth for a chat. Each of the characters finds a way to help Red Knit Cap Girl realize her dream. Stoop has created a cute story with a charming main character and an interesting plot that children will enjoy. In addition, Stoop’s paint-on-wood illustrations are simply captivating and significantly add to the natural feel of this story. The story could be used to teach problem solving or incorporated into a lesson or an activity about nature, the moon, or cooperation. Stoop’s use of found materials for the illustrations would make a great example for an art lesson or an Earth Day activity as well. I highly recommend this book to school and public libraries.

Bird King, The: an Artist’s Notebook
The Bird King: an Artist’s Notebook, by Shaun Tan, shows the inner working of the mind of an artist. Many of the illustrations show the artist developing new ideas and creating beginning ideas to a number of untold stories. Shaun Tan, the artist, provides minimal passages for each section explaining inspiration and mental notes next to peculiar drawings. The artwork is consistently beautiful and is created in multiple mediums like graphite, paint, pastel and so many others. Shaun Tan, the New York Times bestselling author of The Arrival, shows readers a number of ideas in The Bird King: an Artist’s Notebook. From realistic illustrations to peculiar robots, creatures and animals from other worlds to lose scribbles, this brilliant artist shows the process of drawings for books and films. Some illustrations, mostly of the creatures from another world, are open to interpretation, like the one titled ‘A mechanical penguin.’ This book would be fantastic for high school librarians with aspiring artistic students.

Polar Bear Morning
A polar bear cub peeks from his cave and climbs out to explore the world around him. He meets another cub and they play together all day, exploring the wonders of the arctic together. The straightforward plot is beautifully executed with restrained but evocative text and soft, expressive linocut print illustrations. Thompson and Savage are the creative team behind Polar Bear Night. This follow-up to that title has a stronger plotline, while maintaining the same high level of almost poetic description. As with Polar Bear Night, the illustrations are consistently well done. The strong, simple shapes bring to mind the spare arctic setting. Most of the full-bleed, double page spread illustrations are made up of different hues of blue and white. When warmer colors make an appearance the impact is powerful. Young children will respond to the gentle story and sweet, uncluttered illustrations. This is a terrific choice for read aloud and a must for art teachers who teach print-making.

Picture Book
Karen J. Wanamaker, Outreach Librarian, Kutztown University of Pa.

Picture Book
Melanie Stuhr, Student, Kutztown University

Picture Book
Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster
Kenya’s Song


Kenya’s homework assignment is to find her favorite song to share with the class. But she likes so many kinds of music, how will she decide what her favorite song is? Kenya’s musical family tries to help by singing their favorite songs, but none of them is quite right. Kenya and her daddy go to the local Caribbean cultural center to explore different types of music. At the end of the day, Kenya learns that sometimes the best music is the music you make up yourself.

This book (the second Kenya book by this author and illustrator team) introduces traditional musical styles and instruments of the Caribbean through simple illustrations that sometimes fall short of capturing the excitement of island music and dance. A glossary would have been helpful for readers unfamiliar with Caribbean music and dance. Young readers with Caribbean roots will enjoy seeing the countries where they are from and pointing them out on the map at the end of the book. The book culminates with Kenya’s song presenting a simple, yet important, message that no matter where a person calls home, music is the universal language.

Picture Book

Carrie T. Kreider, Graduate, Kutztown University

As Fast as Words Could Fly


New Voices award winner, Tuck, and award-winning illustrator, Velasquez, tell the story of Mason Steele, a young African-American student who wins a typing contest in 1960s North Carolina. Mason transcribes letters for his father’s civil rights group and does such a good job that the group surprises Mason with his very own typewriter. Mason practices his typing skills and soon gets a position at the school library typing information onto index cards. Surprised by his accuracy and speed, Mason’s teacher enters him in a county typing tournament. At the tournament, Mason chooses the unpopular manual typewriter because it reminds him of his own machine, and he beats the other students and sets a record for words per minute.

In addition to the story of Mason’s typing success, the reader sees how Mason and his brothers are treated on the bus and in the classroom during the implementation of school desegregation. Although Mason finds success at the tournament, he does not receive any applause, his teacher accepts the award, and he is not treated any differently by his teachers or the other students. The lingering racism following the contest is made clear, but subtly enough as not to underestimate the reader’s comprehension skills.

While this is not a history book about the civil rights movement or desegregation, Tuck uses real-life inspiration to tell a story of an African American boy in the 1960s. The innocuous storyline of a typing contest makes this book appropriate for elementary students as an introduction to the treatment of African Americans during the civil rights movement. Velasquez’s gorgeous illustrations portray the closeness of Mason’s family as well as teachers’ and students’ unease as they accept Black students into the schools.

Picture Book

Carrie T. Kreider, Graduate, Kutztown University
Backseat A-B-See

This picture book is a unique take on teaching young children their A-B-C’s. Each boldly-illustrated page boasts a different road sign that starts with each letter of the alphabet. For the signs that do not always have writing with them in the real world (or one often only sees the graphic or the written word), the author takes the liberty of adding the text below the sign. For example, the pictorial sign for “fire station” is accompanied by a smaller sign with those same words. This would be an excellent book for a road trip; children could search for the various road signs as they are riding. Some of the signs are rare, like Heliport or Van Accessible. The book could also be a fun addition to a collection of A-B-C books in a preschool classroom or at home. Children who are still learning to read may be encouraged by the fact that they can “read” familiar signs.

*Picture Book*  
*Emily L. Hershey, Academic Coach, Agora Cyber Charter School*

I Wonder Why? Series

The “I Wonder Why?” Series consists of over thirty-five titles including; *I Wonder Why Romans Wore Togas, Pirates Wore Earrings, There’s a Hole in the Sky, Countries Have Flags, Zippers Have Teeth,* and *The Sahara is Cold at Night.* These nonfiction books each focus on asking different questions all pertaining to a common topic. For example *I Wonder Why Romans Wear Togas* focuses on information about Ancient Rome. These easy-to-read books contain many colorful pictures, diagrams, and definitions. Each book contains a glossary and index for easy searching. With the new Common Core Standards emphasis on nonfiction, these books would make a great addition to an elementary library or classroom.

*Nonfiction; Picture Book*  
*Megan Phibbs, Librarian, Washington Elementary*

Numbers: Infinity

This is the conclusion to the *Numbers* trilogy preceded by *Numbers and Numbers: Chaos.* Imagine walking through a crowd of people and seeing the date that everyone will die. This is the “curse” of Jem and her son, Adam. The third book deals with Adam; his wife, Sarah; and their daughter, Mia. Not only can Mia see the “death dates of people”, she can switch her number with the numbers of others. This makes her incredibly valuable to a certain group of people. Adam, Sarah, and Mia race through England, trying to escape from the men who want to capture Mia. I would recommend reading the other two books in the trilogy first because this book is somewhat hard to follow without them. I believe there is a little bit too much violence and sexuality for students below 8th grade but I would recommend this book as a great read for students in 8th-12th grade. If you like this book I would recommend *The Drowning* by Rachel Ward and *The Raven Boys* by Maggie Stiefvater.

*Young Adult; Science Fiction*  
*Andrew Boyer, PA State Employee*
The Templeton Twins Have an Idea

John and Abigail Templeton are twin 12-year-olds who live with their extraordinary father, Professor Elton Templeton. After the death of their mother, the Templetons relocate to a new area where Professor Templeton can continue his work on his zany inventions and teach classes. Unfortunately, chaos ensues when a former student declares that he gave Professor Templeton ideas for his latest invention, The Personal One-Man Helicopter. The twins get caught up in the student’s schemes to force the professor to give him rights and profits from the invention. The story is told by the narrator, who provides the comic relief to the plot. At times the narrator can be a bit annoying by breaking up the story too much and inserting too many repetitive comments. This book would be wonderful for students who are reluctant to read and are looking for something funny and enjoyable. Those who like *A Series of Unfortunate Events* may want to give this new series a try. The illustrations throughout the book are linked well to the invention and science theme of the story and add interest to the text.

Chapter Book; Fiction

Tiffany Yehl, 5th grade teacher, PA Leadership Charter School

Why Do Elephants Need the Sun?

Providing over fifty scientific facts, *Why Do Elephants Need the Sun?*, by Robert E. Wells, makes science interesting for all students. In the book the number of facts about the sun includes space, earth, animals, water, carbon dioxide, gravity, photosynthesis and so many more scientific topics. The illustrations, created with pen and acrylic paint, which tell the story of plants, animals and space, are what make the book so interesting for kids. It is presented through horizontal and vertical pages with crosshatching details and very bright colors. Space, hydrogen atoms, solar eclipse, electricity, wind turbines and the core of the sun are explained with fun graphics in fewer than thirty pages, without making it a bore for students. This book is essential for middle school librarians and science units.

Nonfiction

Melanie Stuhr, Student, Kutztown University

Dino-Football

It’s carnivores versus herbivores in the Mega Bowl at the Lava Dome! Filled with football lingo and dinosaur nicknames, this follow-up to *Dino-Soccer, Dino-Hockey, Dino-Baseball, and Dino-Basketball*, is irresistible to dinosaur-loving sports fans. The rhyming text reads like a play-by-play, making this title most accessible to those who are familiar with the sport. The colorful illustrations are as dynamic and busy as the text. The dinosaur nicknames might be hard to follow, but Gott provides team rosters on the second page, which may help sports fans keep track of the action. A few details reference key aspects of the football experience beyond the game itself: tailgating fans, the “Good Era Blimp”, a halftime show, and the dumping of “Dino-Ade” on the winning coach. A few of the rhymes are a little clunky and the rhythm is not always consistent, but fans of the series will hardly care. The appeal for the target audience is obvious. Highly recommended for any elementary collection.

Picture Book

Stephanie Gibson, Librarian, Montessori Academy of Lancaster
The Princess and the Packet of Frozen Peas

The young Prince Henrik’s brother, Prince Hans, found his wife using a test designed to find the most sensitive of princesses, a single pea under a large pile of mattresses and other fancy dressings. Prince Hans says that a princess should be so sensitive that she can feel the hidden pea and complain until the situation is remedied. Prince Henrik thinks that his brother’s wife, Princess Ava, is too sensitive. In fact she is just downright whiny. He wants someone exactly the opposite of Princess Ava. Prince Henrik’s future bride must "like hockey and camping and have a nice smile." He comes up with the perfect test to find such a girl. She will have to sleep in a sleeping bag on a thin camping mattress with an entire packet of frozen peas beneath it. Several sensitive girls fail Henrik’s test and he is begins to get discouraged. Finally his good friend Pippa comes over. They spend the whole day having fun together and Henrik realizes how nice his old friend is. He decides to put Pippa through the test with frozen packet of peas and see how she does. Pippa wakes the next morning exclaiming that she slept "fantastically well." Henrik instantly knows that she is the girl he has been waiting for. Adorable light illustrations created using an unusual mixture of pencil, gouache, and collage are unique matching the equally quirky text of the book. The text whimsically mixes up the classic tale of the princess and the pea creating a new contemporary version and even breaks some frilly princess stereotypes. Unique young princesses and their parents will enjoy reading this story together and looking at its unique pattern driven illustrations.

*Picture Book*  
*Mandalee Flannery, Student, Kutztown University*

The Granddaughter Necklace

From the beginning of the book the reader is drawn in by the warm illustrations of a beautiful sunset. A crystal beaded necklace is handed down through the generations of women of Sharon’s family who narrates the story. Each time the necklace is given to one of the girls it is during a significant time in the girl’s life. The story begins with Frances traveling from Ireland and ending with Sharon’s daughter, Georgia. At the end of the book there is an author’s note that includes information about how the book is loosely based on the author’s ancestors and stories that were passed down to Wyeth. The author is a great storyteller and leaves the reader feeling like they too need to discover their own family stories and share them with others to preserve personal stories that make the United States what it is today. Both the story and illustrations make this book an excellent addition to any elementary or public library. This book could be used for teaching about family traditions and family trees along with African American history.

*Picture Book*  
*Sarah Meitzler, Circulation Manager, Lower Macungie Library*
Fish for Jimmy: Inspired by One Family’s Experience in a Japanese American Internment Camp

Presenting the history of the Japanese internment camps to young learners can be problematic. Yamasaki gently touches on controversial issues without overwhelming the reader. The story begins with Jimmy and Taro’s everyday life in California. The arrival of the FBI at the family’s door following the bombing in Pearl Harbor is explained simply and without unnecessary drama. Although the author explains the chaos the family is placed in when taken to the internment camp far from their home, the darkness of these events is lightened by text that suggests ideas without going into detail. Having been left in charge by his father, Taro watches over his younger brother. However, Jimmy easily grows depressed and refuses to eat. He withdraws from the active life he once enjoyed. Taking on the responsibility given to him by his father, Taro works to solve the problem. He sneaks out of the barracks at night, travels down to the river, and catches fish to bring back for Jimmy. The folk-art illustrations depict story events and provide background for the text with a light-touch to a serious topic. The author explains the origin of the story events in the back of the book which gives a better understanding of a disturbing event in American history.

**Picture Book: Historical Fiction**

Nancy E. Cardenuto, Asst. Prof., Kutztown University

The Helpful Puppy

*The Helpful Puppy,* by Kim Zarins, is a soon to be classic tale of a puppy wanting to help on the farm. Throughout the story, this delightful puppy goes around the farm just wanting to lend a paw to the animals around him. The helpful puppy visits the hens laying eggs, the sheep giving wool, the horses giving rides to the people, the rooster setting off an alarm, and many others to then realize where he is needed and where he belongs. Emily Arnold McCully creates illustrations of the farm setting, animals and people that are beautifully painted in light watercolors. For young children, this is an adorable story of a little boy and his small puppy, using a number of farm animal noises.

**Animal Story**

Melanie Stuhr, Student, Kutztown University