SPACER
THIS ISSUE FEATURES:

■ The Power of a Book: Writing for Young Audiences

■ One Thing I do: I Write
Author Lee Roddy

■ How to Salvage Water Damaged Books

■ URLs You Can Use

■ Recharging Your Energy: Book Nook

■ Beyond the Theme: Encouraging Kids in Writing Assignments

■ Check It Out: Homeschoolers Use Public Libraries
Dear Readers,

Sometimes one feels that they have been especially blessed with the books they are reading; this has been such a time for me recently. Jan Karon’s books set in Mitford (At Home in Mitford, A Light in the Window; Lion Publishing/ChariotVictor) make me laugh, while reminding me of many of God’s important truths in walking this Christian walk. I just finished reading her third book, These High Green Hills, and I understand that book four has just come out. Seldom do we find books with such warmth and caring, spiced with laughter.

Another book I have been reading recently is a book on contemplative prayer, The Soul at Rest, by Tricia McCary Rhodes (Bethany House Publishers). I began using this book during my devotional time for Lent, thinking its forty sections were just the right length; wrong...I am less than half way through, and still being challenged daily by the precepts found there.

Another title I really enjoyed is The Parish Papers by George MacDonald (ChariotVictor), a new edition edited by Dan Hamilton. Three complete novels in one, the titles included are A Quiet Neighborhood, The Seaboard Parish, and The Vicar’s Daughter. Mr. Hamilton’s editing seems to be close to the original, but shorter and easier to understand without all the dialect.

A young adult novel I especially enjoyed is The Second Bend in the River by Ann Rinaldi (Scholastic). Ms. Rinaldi has a way of writing historical fiction with a special angle, giving me new insights into different aspects of our American history. She makes me think!

These titles will all be reviewed in the next issue of CLJ, which will be mailed in late June or early July. Included with that mailing will be an index of titles and authors reviewed during the first two years of our publication.

Please note: we are trying to reduce our inventory of back issues, and are offering them at half price, $4.50 each. All are available except January and March of 1996. This price will hold as supplies last, but no longer than June 30, 1997.

In Christ’s love,

Nancy L. Hesch

Editor and Publisher

P.S. Thanks to those of you who included notes of thanks and encouragement along with your subscription renewals. They were a blessing to us here! In answer to a frequent question we get, yes, you may order from any issue of CLJ, last year or this one.

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

Nancy Hesch Publisher
Kitty Lindstrom Design and Layout

Cover illustration from BLESS ALL CREATURES HERE BELOW, by Judith Gwyn Brown; illustrated by Herbert G. Draesel, Jr. Reprinted by permission of Morehouse Publishing. © 1996.

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Papers are graded, report cards completed, bulletin boards cleared, teaching aids are stored. You have said goodbye to students and fellow teachers. You are ready to put the key in the lock and walk out the door to another summer.

What do these next two or three months hold for you? As teachers our lives seem to revolve around the school calendar; goals to be met with our pupils, lessons to be taught, problems to be solved. We look forward to summer to catch our breath, get recharged, renew relationships, rest, travel, and play.

We need this time. Teaching is an intense vocation as we focus on the learning and problems of our students. We have been caregivers for the past nine months to many others and now it is time to take care of ourselves.

As Christians we may feel it is selfish to focus too much on ourselves, and so we give and we give to our students, family, and friends. Unless we pause to nourish our own souls we become a stranger to ourselves. If one is out of touch with oneself and God, then one cannot touch others. Summer gives us an opportunity for new direction and renewal. God has created us to be diverse and unique persons—a totality of mind, body, and spirit, each of us with unique gifts and abilities.

How do you use the days ahead to rest and find renewal? What is it that you need? Your circumstances will partly dictate how you go about this. You may need to work at a summer job, take classes, keep family commitments. But there will be a change to the pattern and rhythm of your days. Give yourself permission to say it is important to take care of yourself, then do it!

Discuss your needs with your family and spouse. One summer I declared that except for an
emergency no one was to bother, interrupt, or ask anything of me in the morning until eight o’clock. I had the freedom to get up at six a.m. if I wanted, and dig weeds, go for a walk, read, write, sew, create, or sleep. If someone was hungry they could fix themselves something to eat. If I was hungry I could have a bowl of ice cream or a piece of cake if I so desired! I had given myself the freedom to have time for solitude, thinking, and meditating. I could walk down a hushed neighborhood street, breathe in the fresh new air, hear the morning song of birds, and hear God’s voice in the still and quiet of a new day.

Another summer living in Kansas with three small boys who didn’t allow for mom to have much free time, my husband would watch the boys most evenings after dinner while I rode my bike under the spreading elm trees of our town and took time to breathe and think. By the time I got home he would have the little ones bathed and ready for bed. We would tuck them in and then go and sit in the big swing on our screened porch sharing the events and thoughts of the day.

The important thing is take advantage of the changes in your summer schedule, to give yourself time for the renewal you need. Identify what you need and where you want to be personally and in your relationships at the end of the summer. Your answers may change as the days and weeks progress. But unless we know the direction we are headed, we never get very far. What values are important to you and your family? Begin each day with these values firmly in mind.

Simplify so you can experience a rich life. Cooking can be less elaborate. Enjoy the abundance of fresh vegetables and fruits. Eat them raw whenever possible; it’s good for you and easier. Turn the TV off more, go to the store less often. Walk barefoot on cool floors or dew dampened grass.

Take the time to listen to good music and to others. Take time daily for study of the scripture, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians. Browse at the library for books to feed your mind and soul. Read old familiar favorites. C. S. Lewis has said that the best books are to be savored, read again and again.

At the beginning of summer I inevitably take down a well-worn copy of Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s book *Gift From the Sea* where she chronicles a summer spent in solitude and searching. It points me in the right direction for the days ahead.

Don Hall’s book *Seasons at Eagle Pond* is a treasure to be enjoyed repeatedly. His poetic prose captures the seasons on a New Hampshire farm. Hall’s newer book for children, *Lucy’s Summer*, tells of the time when his mother was seven years old on that same farm in 1910. It’s a great book to share with a youngster and discover together how our lives have changed.

I usually pick up one of Catherine Marshall’s books to read again, and then there is the pile of books purchased over the winter but not yet read. A new book I am looking forward to reading is *The Journeyman* by Elizabeth Yates. It is the tale of a young man in colonial times who learned how to stencil the walls of homes. I’m intrigued with it as I plan to practice this craft in my own home. Peruse the reviews and order some of the books in the *Christian Library Journal*. Reading opens our mind and perspective to new creative possibilities.

Rest, play, read, contemplate, and relate to others. Plan for it. Do it! Come back to work in September recharged and renewed physically, mentally, and spiritually. We can only give to our students and to others what we have received. Have a wonderful summer and a great time of living!
Who really cares what you did on your summer vacation? I mean, that was so incredibly long ago! Or who wants to know about your favorite toy? Or what you want for Christmas? To a kid, the answer is clear: no one!

If you had to suffer through insufferable theme-writing while growing up, you can identify with the groans invariably uttered by kids afflicted with it today. When contemplating writing assignments for children of any age, a teacher or homeschooling parent knows there must be a better way.

There is — in fact, there are many better ways. The key to enticing kids to dig into a writing assignment lies in making the subject matter or process interesting enough to spark their imaginations.

My son's fourth-grade teacher understood this well. And she understood that it would be difficult for her to come up with class assignments that engaged every child. So she left it up to the parents to come up with interesting, individualized "theme themes."

When my husband and I came in for orientation day, one of our assignments was to list ten creative theme titles for Michael. As parents, we found this great fun. After all, we knew where his interests lay and what was likely to spark his imagination. So we listed titles like "What I Would Do With One Million Dollars," "The Monster In My Closet" and "How I Saved My Little Sister Who Was Lost in the Forest." Michael didn’t write themes on each of our ten titles, but it gave him an interesting range of options. His teacher also let him come up with his own ideas.

For kids who aren’t strong in the creative writing department, how about asking them to write a theme based on a favorite film? It could be one that the class or family recently watched together. Ask the children to retell the story in their own words, using description of scenery, costumes, and action. Many professional writers put bread on the table by writing books based on films, and you can point this out to the kids.

But don’t stop there. Ask them to change the ending to something they think would have been funny or sad or outrageous. Let them write themselves into the film story and encourage them to change the plot to reflect what they would have done. Not only does this exercise open the door to creativity, but it also has the potential of teaching a child writer the importance of thinking ahead in the plot. If they write themselves into a corner, they’ll have to backtrack to change the action. It helps them learn to think sequentially.

Another potentially side-splitting offshoot of this type of assignment is to choose a relatively brief segment of videotape from a movie, old TV show, or commercial. Have the child or children watch the segment — but turn down the sound. Then ask the kids to write a story or description based on what they saw. Sometimes they come up with hilarious interpretations of the events they witnessed but didn’t hear.

Interviews can also harness writing creativity. Interviewing grandparents and parents might work with some kids, but not everyone wants to know what their folks ate for breakfast in kindergarten. Instead, let kids interview local celebrities, dignitaries, or town personalities. For instance, one child in my third-grade newspaper class was fascinated...
with how the policeman who sat outside her school every day ran radar to catch speeders. She called the police station, set up a time when the policeman could come to her (or talk to the child on the phone), and prepared by writing a list of questions for him. Not only did she enjoy writing her story, but she learned something about police work and the importance of obeying the law in the process.

For the child who is gifted artistically but not necessarily with words, how about letting him/her write a comic book plot? The child could base it on a cartoon character, video game, or comic he or she likes — or how about a character they created themselves? My son has written a whole series of humorous comic strips centered around the character of “Grumpy George” (his own creation). George may be grumpy, but he has a real way with words. Michael has fun using palindromes, puns, and playing on words to make George’s adventures funny. For a while, he and his friends were so into creating their own comics that they had an informal writing club.

When my family traveled to Disney World several years ago, I was fascinated by the tour of a Foley stage, on which specialists added sound effects to films. Why not reverse the process? Make a tape (make sure it’s nice and loud) of a series of sounds: walking feet, sandpaper on a board, crashing glass, moaning, whistling, a punching bag, a pencil scratching across a piece of paper. Play it several times for an individual child or a class of kids. Have them close their eyes and imagine what sequence of events is making those sounds. Then turn them loose to write a story based on the taped sounds.

You can expand on this idea by using just the taped soundtrack from an old movie, a piece of instrumental music (Philip Glass music makes some particularly interesting sounds), or even some of the sound effects from video games or computer games like Myst. Or just use a sound-effects recording from the library. This exercise tends to work best with mysterious, eerie, or moody sounds and music.

No matter which of these unusual exercises you choose to enhance your writing assignments, you will surprise and delight the children who actually have to do the writing. These kinds of open-ended, creative and yes, even zany, exercises will spark many more ideas in a young writer than would a more traditional theme. And the bonus is, it makes a more interesting read for you, too!

WRITE FOR MEMORIES

Here’s an exercise that is fun now and makes a great addition to a child’s baby book, especially if a parent makes it a yearly project. All your child needs is a pencil, pieces of baby-book-quality paper, photos of the year-gone-by, a glue stick and lots of time.

Tell your child that you want him or her to write a letter to him- or herself as a grown-up. Have them start out by describing some of the events of the past year, using the photos as illustrations. They might also enjoy using memory-joggers such as ticket stubs, candy wrappers, etc. to further illustrate the points they make.

Then ask them to tell their grown-up selves what they believe they’ll be doing at a certain age. For instance, have ten-year-old Terry describe to twenty-five-year-old adult Terry what his/her life looks like at twenty-five. What kind of car does she/he drive? Is Terry married? What about kids? Money? Job? Hobbies?

Finally, have the child writer conclude the letter with advice. Tips like, “Don’t forget how much you liked to watch Batman after school,” “Remember, now you can stay up until midnight whenever you want,” or “Be sure to eat a candy bar every day,” will make this letter a treasure that 25-year-old Terry really will enjoy! And meanwhile, it teaches ten-year-old Terry that writing is fun!
CAREERS AND CAREER PLANNING

The topic of study for this issue is careers/career planning. To begin your search, determine whether or not you want to peruse books/resources which provide a broad spectrum of the market and careers available. Or you may choose to jump right into specific career listings you’re interested in studying. For a general interest study of the market (and to locate basic, helpful information on specific career choices) key words to cue into the library’s computer are: (careers, vocations, occupations). Under the general heading of career planning, alternative careers, etc... In order to locate your individual and specific career choice, key in the name of your occupation, i.e....medicine. Under this general heading you can choose many positions available in that field. Some headings include: physician, nurse, medical technologist, radiologist, anesthesiologist, surgeon.

Some general resource books I located are listed below. Each includes an overall look at the market while also providing in-depth information on specific career choices. While these books appear similar in content, each provides unique information not found in the other two, so it’s best to comparison shop when reading these guides.

✓ *Encyclopedia of Careers & Vocational Guidance*, J.G. Ferguson Publishing Company, 1993. This book includes general information on choosing a career, describes the structure of the industry, hundreds of career opportunities (citing the positions available, educational background needed, industry outlook), and important sources of additional information for further reading.


✓ *The American Almanac of Jobs & Salaries*, John W. Wright, Avon Books, 1996. This book is broken down into specific areas of interest. Most positions available are found under the following headings: public payroll, five standard professions, science & technology, key white
collar jobs, representative businesses, health care, workaday world and special groups. Gives the vital statistics and just about everything else you would want to know about your field.

BOOKS TO TAKE HOME WITH YOU.

✓ Jobs Strategies for People with Disabilities, Melanie Astaire Witt, Peterson’s Guides, 1992. If your child or anyone you know has a disability (mild or severe) this book is the one to read. From page one, positive approaches are stressed and practical advice is laid out. Includes: self-assessment/able to do the job, making the job fit you, creating standout resumes and cover letters, finding job leads, researching employers, interviewing and many organizations, associations, and agencies.

✓ Hook Up, Get Hired! The Internet Job Search Revolution, Joyce Lain Kennedy, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995. This book provides the ins and outs of taking advantage of today’s technology. Readers will know how to look for jobs, plug into organizations already doing what they want to, research their careers, see what’s available, interact with the professionals, etc..

✓ Interview Strategies That Will Get You the Job You Want, Andrea Kay, Betterway Books, 1996. A great guide for preparing to meet the professional and working world. Answers more than 60 questions commonly asked, teaches the interviewee how to prepare, anticipate questions, overcome the odds, and present a confident, capable image.

CALL AROUND.

Your local library is only the beginning for researching your career of choice. Search out local universities, public school guidance counselors, adult education departments, and learning skill centers for more valuable information or to answer any questions you may have. You can also check out the telephone directory and locate nearby professionals for helpful advice in getting started.

If you’re interested in apprenticeships and internships, write to Jonathan Ross, president of JR Associates, 135 Whites Bridge Road, Standish, Maine 04084 or telephone 207-892-7946. Mr. Ross heads a work-based consulting service.

TIPS TO TAKE WITH YOU.

✓ Libraries will go to great lengths to locate unusual and hard to find books at your request. Often our libraries are charged a fee for being sent books across the country and they will absorb the fee.

✓ Many library patrons know that they can request particular books not currently in their library system and the library will purchase books when asked. However, the same holds true for magazines. Patrons can fill out a request form for magazines subscriptions also.

✓ Libraries can only display magazines for a certain length of time due to space restrictions. Thus, many systems now have the capacity to store dated magazines on CD-ROM. Our system keeps magazine issues back four years.

CHRISTIAN LIBRARY JOURNAL 7 MARCH, 1997
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I almost made the biggest mistake of my life and abandoned the juvenile field...until a book arrived in the mail that carried me back to my childhood.

A prodigious reader, I discovered books like *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden* and *Emily of New Moon* could carry me far away to different lands and different centuries.

My favorite books were Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* series. Each year a new one appeared under the Christmas tree with my name on the gift tag. There came an autumn, however, when it looked as if no further Wilder book would be there. *The Little Town on the Prairie* seemed to finish off the story of Laura and Mary’s childhood years. Surely Laura would marry Almanzo Wilder because that was the author’s name, wasn’t it?

One stormy November day, I sat down at my desk to write to my favorite author, telling her how much I enjoyed each book, and how I wished she could write one more to end the series with Almanzo’s courtship. I already knew that I wanted to be a writer when I grew up, but I was far too shy to admit that to Mrs. Wilder.

Instead, I asked her how to make sourdough. Back came a letter from the Wilder farm in Missouri, written in Laura’s handwriting on lined stationery. In addition to telling me exactly how to make sourdough, she assured me that the book I’d requested, *These Happy Golden Years*, was going to be on the bookstore shelves in time for Christmas.

Although Laura Wilder never lived to see my work in print, she has always remained my role model. When I teach or lead workshops, I use her carefully detailed descriptions of prairies, blizzards, and warm family life as examples. I have read her books countless times, as I struggle over my own depictions of characters and scenes.

When Laura needed a long sentence, she crafted one. When a short one worked best, that is what she used. At least one of her sentences in *The Long Winter* is forty-two words long. Another is only three: “Pa’s nose purpled.” Those were the only words necessary to show how cold it was.

One day a twelve-year-old boy growing up on a midwestern farm wrote to me. He told me why he liked my books. He wrote about his pets, the farm animals, and his hobbies. At last he got around to what he really wanted to say. “P.S. I want to be a writer.” (The spelling is his.)

That farm lad reminds me of the little girl growing up in Brooklyn many years ago. But at least he set his shyness aside long enough to confide “I want to be a writer.” I am glad he liked my books. I hope his dream of being a published author has come true.

What about the book that arrived in the mail the other day and stirred me to take another look at the direction I wish to take? *Dear Laura*, compiled by HarperCollins editor, Alix Reid, is a charming collection of over 100 letters written to Laura Ingalls Wilder from the 1930’s into the early 1950’s. A copy of my letter to Laura Wilder is on page forty-four and her return letter to me, with directions on how to make sourdough is on the very next page!

I had forgotten about the warm way youngsters respond to books that touch them until I sat down and laughed and wept over every page of *Dear Laura*. It reminded me of the meaning books can bring to children’s lives, how a special book may act as a rudder to steer them, fostering hope and understanding.

Not long ago, I went to my files and leafed through the letters and the crayoned illustrations of scenes from my books that children had sent to me. Many of them begged me to write more books.

Yes, I’ve changed my mind. I want to begin writing for a young audience once again.

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Books by Mary Warren

**Westminster Press:**
- Eight Bells for Wendy
- Shadow on the Valley
- Walk in My Moccasins
- A Snake Named Sam
- Ghost Town for Sale
- River School Detectives
- The Haunted Kitchen

**Concordia:**
- The City That Forgot Christmas
- The Great Surprise
- The Little Boat That Almost Sank
- The Lame Man Who Walked Again
- The Great Escape
- Boy With a Sling

**Augsburg Publishing House:**
- Lord, I’m Back Again
- The Land of Christmas
- On Our Way to Christmas

**Rand McNally:**
- Hoppity Skip
- Pet Parade
- The Treasure Trunk
- Building With Boxes
- Speed Buggy & the Secret Message

**Chosen/Zondervan:**
- Let the Earth Bring Forth

**Walker:**
- Bottom High to the Crowd
“One Thing I Do: I Write”

Author Lee Roddy

by Lorinda K. F. Newton

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

“I write. What can I write for you?” asked Lee Roddy as he went door-to-door in Los Angeles seeking work.

Early in his writing career, Roddy wrote whatever other people needed written: jacket copy for books and records, radio ads and dramas, news articles. But he didn’t just write for his employers. God also responded to Roddy’s question and called him to write adventure stories with Christian themes. Using Lee Roddy’s lifelong passion for writing, God has touched the lives of millions of adults and children around the world.

Lee Roddy decided to be a writer around age twelve or thirteen. Growing up, he enjoyed reading dime westerns and adventure stories by authors such as Jack London. These inspired him to write his own adventure stories. Roddy sold his first short story to an Oakland, California, newspaper at age fourteen. In 1945, he earned a degree in journalism and radio broadcasting at Los Angeles City College; then he headed to Hollywood to begin his writing career.

Unable to secure a screen-writing position, Roddy found his first full-time writing job at a Los Angeles advertising agency. Then he worked in many writing-related jobs: network-radio drama writer before the days of TV; staff writer for a motion picture and television production company, where he wrote The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams (a book that became a motion picture and TV series); a news reporter and columnist; a newspaper editor-publisher for four community papers; a radio-station manager; and an ad-agency executive. Roddy began to speak at schools, colleges, conferences, and conventions in 1973, traveling both the United States and Canada.

He has also written or edited for eighty national or international Christian leaders or their ministries. For Campus Crusade for Christ, he wrote a book about Jesus based on the gospel of Luke. In 1979, this book became the Jesus film that has been translated into over 300 languages.

During the forty-two years that he held a day job, Roddy rose at 4:00 a.m. and wrote until he left for work at 8:00 a.m. He had eleven books completed before the first one, Robert E. Lee: A Gallant Christian Soldier, a biography written for children, was published in 1977. Next came The Lincoln Conspiracy, a New York Times best-seller. By 1980, Roddy attained his life-time long dream of making a living as a freelance writer. His first juvenile novel, The Hair-Pulling Bear Dog, book one of the D.J. Dillion series, was published in 1985.

Currently, Roddy has had over seventy novels and nonfiction books published. Thirty of these have been either best-sellers, motion pictures, TV programs, book-club selections, or award winners. Some of his children’s novels have been translated into several foreign languages.

One thing I do

Though once a national lecturer, Roddy now restricts his speaking to Saturday-only engagements, usually just at the Christian Home Educators and the Association of Christian Schools International conferences.

Just as the Apostle Paul said, “But one thing I do,” in following the call of Christ, Roddy explained, “One thing I do: I write. Everything else is secondary, including speaking and teaching in person.”

So his life focuses on writing. Each weekday morning, he wakes up at 5:00, has his Bible-study time, breakfast, and walks two miles at dawn. He sits down to write around 7:30 or 8:00. In the afternoons, he handles letters and other business and spends most evenings researching.

Life-shaping adventure

Why does Roddy put so much effort into his writing? “I’d like to think lives are different because of some of the things I wrote,” he answered. “If I had my druthers, I’d like to write something that will reach to a generation yet unborn.” He hopes to do this by using character-building, Judeo-Christian themes in high-adventure stories.

“It’s a sin to bore a child,” stated Roddy. “The first reason children choose to read is for entertainment. So I give them high-adventure—mystery, animals, and scary things—but all in a Christian theme.”
The action begins on page one, and he “tries to keep it going until the last page.”

Starting with a good story, Roddy then weaves in Judeo-Christian values—but without preaching. He places his characters in situations from which they will learn the message he seeks to convey. One of his most frequent themes is “whatever you believe is the way you behave; the way you behave eventually will be what you’ll become.” Teaching kids that their thoughts will shape their character is very important to Roddy.

And this message has changed the lives of many. Often people tell Roddy that they identify with one of his characters and want to be like him or her “because the person prays, is honest, or does the right thing in tough circumstances.” For instance, Roddy received a letter from a twelve-year-old boy who said he had attended “religious schools” all his life, but “thanks to your books, I’ve become a born-again Christian.”

Getting kids to read

Besides molding character, Roddy’s books help reluctant readers get hooked on reading. Hundreds of parents and teachers have sent him letters stating that their non-readers have become avid readers after being introduced to one of his books. Receiving such letters is “probably the most serendipitous thing that has happened to me out of my writing,” exclaimed Roddy. “I never dreamed that would happen.”

To encourage children to be readers, Roddy advises people to start reading to their children when they are very young. He has two eight-year-old grandsons, and when they were younger, Roddy would set them on his lap and read to them. This caused them to “associate books with warm, fuzzy times,” Roddy explained.

Roddy suggests that parents of older children should try to get their kids to read not because it’s good for them, but because books are exciting. Tell the child, “You want to read something exciting? Read this book. Listen to the story and then read a little bit.” After you read the beginning to him, let the child finish it on his own.

Future plans

The fifteenth and last book of the Ladd Family Adventure series will be released later this year. His next six-book juvenile series will be about a boy and a girl growing up during the Civil War. Roddy hopes to appeal to both audiences with the dual point-of-view in this series. In addition, he is writing an adult trilogy that will take place at the close of the Civil War.

Roddy has also recently set his sights on a different type of project: getting his books into the public schools. He has seen what the school children have available and wants to offer them an alternative—books with Christian themes. Though he doesn’t know how it will happen, he has a peace in his heart that it will work. “God has let me achieve more than I ever dreamed. So that would be an impossible dream, especially since I’m not 21 anymore.”

That is not to say age will ever stop Roddy from dreaming. Many people have asked when he plans to retire. To this, he responds, “Well, Billy Graham says he doesn’t read in the Bible where it says anything about retirement. So I figure as long as God gives me health and people who buy my books, I’m going to keep writing.”
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Twelve-year-old Hildy Corrigan seeks a forever home for her family during the Great Depression. Offers an accurate depiction of life in the 1930s.

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   - Bethany House Publishers
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   - paperback $ 5.99
   - Gr. 3 - 7

2. *The Desperate Search*
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   - © 1989

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   - ISBN 155-661-0955
   - © October 1990

6. *Terror in the Sky*
   - ISBN 155-661-0963
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7. *Mystery of the Phantom Gold*
   - ISBN 155-661-2109
   - © October 1991

    *Gold Train Bandits*
    - ISBN 155-991-2117
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8. *High Country Ambush*  
   - (Silver Angel Award)
   - ISBN 155-661-2877
   - © September 1992

**Ladd Family Adventure Series**

(See book reviews for books 13 and 14)

1. *Secret of the Shark Pit*
   - ISBN 092-960-8143
   - Focus on the Family Publishing
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2. *The Legend of Fire*
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3. *Mystery of the Island Jungle*
   - ISBN 092-960-8194
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5. *Secret of the Sunken Sub*
   - ISBN 092-960-8631
   - © May 1990

6. *Mystery of the Wild Surfer*
   - © May 1990

7. *Peril at Pirates Point*
   - ISBN 156-179-1369
   - © May 1993

8. *Terror at Forbidden Falls*
   - ISBN 156-179-1377
   - © June 1993

9. *Eye of the Hurricane*
   - ISBN 156-179-2209
   - © April 1994

10. *Night of the Vanishing Lights*
    - ISBN 156-179-256X
    - © September 1994

11. *Case of the Dangerous Cruise*
    - ISBN 156-179-3493
    - © March 1995

12. *Panic in the Wild Waters*
    - ISBN 156-179-3922
    - © August. 1995

**Giants on the Hill Trilogy**

(See book reviews)

1. *Giants on the Hill*
   - Word Publishing
   - © September 1994
   - paperback $10.99
   - Adult

2. *Cinnabar*
   - © October 1995
   - paperback $12.99

3. *Shiloh’s Choice*
   - © November 1996
   - paperback $10.99
PRIMARY STUDENTS GET PUBLISHED

Elementary school students can submit a variety of projects to Children’s Playmate Magazine, if the focus is on developing healthy eating and exercise habits. Fiction stories, up to 700 words, can include fantasy and folktales, sports. Nonfiction articles, also up to 700 words, might profile a child athlete or cover fitness, sports, nutrition, history, science or nature themes. Keep your writing lively. Encyclopedia-type reports are not wanted. Poetry is accepted from young readers, as are drawings, jokes and riddles. Playmate wants easy-to-read pieces. The target audience is ages 6 to 8. Manuscripts can neatly hand-write their work, or have someone type it. The editors will respond within three months. Be sure to enclose a self addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) for a reply. Students receive no cash payment, but do get published nationally, with their name on their work, and receive at least one sample copy of the issue with their writing in it. Their newest guidelines are free if you send a SASE. Sample copies are in many libraries, or you can send $1.25 for your own. Submit to Editor Terry Harshman, PO Box 567, Indianapolis, IN 46206-0567.

TEENS GET PUBLISHED

More experienced writers can send work to Cobblestone, the History Magazine for Young People. They like writing about American events, people and places. Each monthly issue has a theme. Send a SASE for free guidelines and a theme list. Cobblestone is published monthly, except during the summer. Send an 8x11” SASE with four stamps on it for a sample copy. Fiction and nonfiction articles are accepted from adult writers only. Students may send B/W and color slides, letters to the editor, art and enter contests listed. Deadlines, themes and prizes are listed in each issue. Manuscripts must be typed, with a cover letter. The target is ages 8 to 14. Editor Meg Chorlian wants historical accuracy and originality in work sent. And staying on the theme is a must. Staff is working nine months ahead of publication (lead time). Students get published, with their name (byline) and cash prizes, which vary monthly. Send to 7 School St., Peterborough, NH 0345-81457.

STUDENT CONTESTS

Stage plays written by students under age 18 are sought for the Young Playwrights Festival annually. Target audience is adults. No previously published work can be used. Deadline is October 1. Some facets of the contest and prizes vary yearly. Send a SASE for contest and award rules and entry forms. Musicals, screenplays and adaptations are not accepted. Obviously, this contest is for older students, who are more trained in script writing and want a challenge with professional rewards. Write to Artistic Director Nancy Quinn, 321 W. 44th St. Suite 906, New York, NY 10036.

WRITERS WORDS TO KNOW

Copies: Most magazines give free copies of the edition your work is in

Fantasy: Writing about un-real people, events, places, like trolls, fairies

Lively writing: Non-boring, non-report-like, interesting

Profile: A piece that gives details about a person, their activities, background, plans

Submit: To send

Target Age: The ages of primary readers of the publication

by Penny Lent

Penny Lent lives in Puyallup, Washington, with her husband, two sons, two orange cats, and assorted northwest slugs. Lent is a frequent conference and school speaker and has freelanced over six hundred articles for radio, magazines, and her newspaper columns. She is editor and designer of two national newsletters and has authored seven books, including Young Writer’s Market Manual, Young Writer’s Contest Manual and Young Writer’s Manuscript Manual from Kaleidoscope Press.
DURING our 1996-97 Christmas-New Year storm, hundreds of gallons of melting snow and rain seeped into our Snohomish County Christian School Elementary library through the flawed roof. A day later we discovered the damage and began vacuuming the water from the carpet. Scores of books were dripping wet, especially the new ones which awaited processing, stacked on a wicker bookshelf in the office, the area worst affected. In the days following, we learned lots about how to salvage water-damaged books.

First of all, and most important, is prevention. If you even suspect your roof might leak (our flat-roofed school has a long history of minor leaks), do not store any books, especially the new, valuable ones, in cardboard boxes on the floor. The rugs and boxes act like sponges, wicking the water directly to the books. Store books in plastic crates, preferably a few inches off the floor.

Secondly, dry soaked books immediately. We used good-quality paper towels, and blotted the moisture from every page of the hardbound picture books and the nonfiction books. We found the paperback books that we had rebound as hardbacks, especially if they had glossy, colorful pages, suffered the most damage, including warped spines, water-logged covers, ruffled pages, and glued shut pages. Thin, black and white paperbacks dried the quickest and best, with the least wrinkling. Surprisingly, the glued spines do not seem to be affected by either the initial wetting or the drying process. However, we may find the books fall apart easily with use. Time will tell.

The very best way to dry books is in a frost-free freezer! Our school hired a flood-damage restoration expert who shared this surprising advice with us. It works. Even the wettest hardbacks dried after five days or so with straight book covers and almost wrinkle-free pages. We weighted the stacked books with dry encyclopedia books, wedged tightly to fit the freezer shelves. Mid-point in the drying process, we took out the books, dried off the frost and condensation, thumbed through to separate all the pages possible, and returned the still-damp ones to the freezer for a few more days.

Another good method for drying wet books, especially black and white paperbacks, is in the food dehydrator. The heat and air circulation are adjustable. However, we did not weight the books because the dehydrator has screen shelves. Consequently, some book covers curled, and the pages have some wrinkling. Also, this method seems to be slower than using the freezer.

A third method to salvage wet books is to initially blot the moisture from all pages, and then to lay them flat (paperbacks), or to prop them open on tables (hardbacks) in the wet library and just leave them to dry as your library is being dried by dehumidifiers. This process took five days from the time a commercial company vacuumed the water from our rugs and installed two huge dehumidifiers and several powerful blowers. First all the dry books on the library shelves had to be sealed in plastic so they would not absorb the moisture the dehumidifiers draw from the walls and carpet.

Soaked CD-ROMS, VCR tapes, and library equipment were blotted with paper towels and left to dry slowly in the library. Fortunately, we always cover our computers with plastic tablecloths, so they were dry.

A water-damaged library creates hours of work for both the librarians and volunteer and commercial clean-up crews. But with the experts, knowledge, equipment, and your frost-free freezer, the books can be salvaged.
URLs you can use:

Compiled by Debra Stombres

**Magazine / Newspaper URLs**

- Autograph Times  
  http://www.celebrityconnection.com/free.htm
- Aviation Week & Space Technology  
  http://www.awgnet.com/aviation.htm
- Books and Culture  
  http://www.christianity.net/bc/current/
- Bowling World  
  http://www.bowlingworld.com
- Box Office (film magazine)  
  http://www.boxoff.com/Field/3523/index.html
- Business Week  
  http://www.businessweek.com
- Campus Life  
  http://www.christianity.net/campuslife/current/
- Chicago Tribune  
  http://www.chicago.tribune.com/
- Christian History  
  http://www.christianity.net/christianhistory/
- Christian Reader  
  http://www.christianity.net/ct/
- Christian Teen  
  http://www2.globalvision.net/resources/teen
- Christianity Net  
  (All Christianity Today, Inc. magazines)  
  http://www.christianity.net
- Christianity Today  
  http://www.christianity.net/ct
- Esquire  
  http://www.esquireb2b.com
- George  
  http://www.georgemag.com
- Health News Naturally  
  http://www.keats.com/news
- HomePC  
  http://techweb.cmp.com/hpc/Jan97/default.html
- Inc. Magazine  
  http://www.inc.com

**Journal of the National Cancer Institute**  
http://wwwicic.nci.nih.gov/jnci/jnci_issues.html

**Leadership**  
http://www.christianity.net/leadership/

**Life**  
http://pathfinder.com/Life/lifehome/html

**The Los Angeles Times**  
http://www.latimes.com

**Marriage Partnership**  
http://www.christianity.net/mp/

**National Geographic**  
http://www.nationalgeographic.com

**Nature**  
http://www.nature.com

**Netguide**  
http://www.netguide.com/

**New Scientist**  
http://www.newscientist.com

**The New York Times**  
http://www.nytimes.com/

**Pathfinder (all Time/Life publications)**  
http://pathfinder.com/
  @@@7Xd*YQQAcnaAPbyo/welcome/

**Today’s Christian Woman**  
http://www.christianity.net/tcw/

**Popular Mechanics**  
http://popularmechanics.com

**Premier Magazine**  
http://www.premieremag.com

**Reader’s Digest (interactive)**  
http://www.readersdigest.com

**Scientific American**  
http://www.sciam.com

**Smithsonian Magazine**  
http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu

**Sports Illustrated for Kids**  
http://pathfinder.com/SIFK

**TV Guide**  
http://www.tvguide.com
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RATING SYSTEM

Quality of Material                                      Acceptability of Material
5  Excellent - among the very best of this type          5  No questionable elements
4  Good - well written; strong recommendation           4  Slight concerns
3  Average - readers will enjoy                         3  Moderate concerns
2  Fair - can recommend, but not as well written        2  Barely acceptable
1  Poor - cannot recommend                              1  Too questionable to recommend

---*In the Beginning.* ISBN 0745931901.
---*David and Goliath.* ISBN 0745931928
---*Noah’s Ark.* ISBN 0745931928


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

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

The other three books in this series are formatted along the same lines. *In the Beginning* is the story of the creation telling in simple terms what was created on each day. *David and Goliath* tells how David the shepherd boy killed the giant. *Noah’s Ark* tells how Noah built the ark and God sent in the animals until the ark was full. Then it rained for forty days, after which God put the rainbow in the sky as a promise to everyone.

*The Christmas Story* is shaped significantly during these vital years. As the author observes in the introduction: during the preschool years the whole foundation for life is laid—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Most of our later life is shaped significantly during these vital years. These are truly the life building years.

These twenty stories, each about ten pages long with bright, bold pictures, help children learn important Bible doctrines and life building values. At the end of each story is a list of six questions in a “Let’s talk” section. Some of the stories explore trusting God, pleasing Jesus, saying thank you to Mom and Dad, or God’s creation of the world. Each is presented in terms of a young child can understand and follow. In “Pleasing Jesus” a boy learns how to give his favorite toy to another child who doesn’t have any toys at all. On the theme of “creation” a child imagines what the world would be like if he had the chance to design it.

The illustrations by Teresa Walsh are large, bright, and colorful and will appeal to a young child. The characters she uses represent different emotions, towards gratefulness and appreciation for what they have—not what they wish they could gain!

*Fanny’s Dream* by Carolyn Buehner shows the true value of human relationships and everyday toil. Mark Buehner creates colorful and clever illustrations that truly catch the mood of the story. This is a delightful tale, one that gives a gentle nudge to the reader towards gratefulness and appreciation for what they have—not what they wish they could gain!

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington

All of these books are designed to be used with the *Preschoolers Bible,* *The Preschoolers Family Story Book* can be used alone in teaching life building values to young children. Although it is designed to be used with the *Preschoolers Bible,* *The Preschoolers Family Story Book* can be used alone in teaching life building values to young children.

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Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


Stout, hard-working Fanny lives on her father’s farm, and amid the daily chores she does, she treasures a special dream in her heart. Surely, if fairy godmothers really grants wishes, then her wish will come true—to marry a prince.

On the night of the ball, which really is the town mayor’s big party, Fanny waits in her garden for her dreams to come true. But after a long wait someone else shows up. This someone brings an offer to Fanny’s life that she never expected—and after considering her options for over an hour, Fanny sets her dreams aside and agrees to marry Heber Jensen, not a prince!

Much time passes, with hard work, twins, and finally a little daughter added to Fanny’s homestead. Then one night, Fanny is once again in her garden and the strangest thing happens! Her very late fairy godmother appears, ready at last to grant her wish.

What will Fanny do? Can she really leave her family and go off to live in riches and glamour, or has she already discovered all the wealth she will ever need?

Charming, unpredictable, and thought-provoking in its simplicity, *Fanny’s Dream* by Carolyn Buehner shows the true value of human relationships and everyday toil. Mark Buehner creates colorful and clever illustrations that truly catch the mood of the story. This is a delightful tale, one that gives a gentle nudge to the reader towards gratefulness and appreciation for what they have—not what they wish they could gain!


David and his father go on an outing to the country and collect caterpillars. Together at home they witness the miracle of a caterpillar turning into a chrysalis and emerging as a butterfly. David’s father uses this time to explain how God changes us into something more beautiful when we ask him into our hearts.

The bright bold illustrations supplement the simple text. The concept of how God changes us is made more clear by the author’s use of caterpillars and butterflies. The parent’s guide gives several suggestions how the book can be used to further build on the concept of conversion.

Although the book is directed to parents, teachers will find it useful also. The uncomplicated words and pictures make this an appealing book; the first person approach will help young readers and
listeners identify with the main character. Not only will the book elicit discussion on how God can see inside us, clear down to our “beautiful bones,” it will also provide inspiration for classroom children to have their own caterpillar perform a conversion miracle for them.

♦ Quality - 4  ♦ Acceptability - 5

Pam Webb
Homeschool Teacher, Freelance Writer
Priest River, Idaho


A little girl’s loving and nurturing care of her kitten, Joseph, is compared to the love God has for his children. Just as Sarah has rescued the kitten from harm and meets his every need, so also God has saved us from a sinful world and supplies our needs such as giving us parents to care for us. The kitten is very lovable even when he is naughty. In the same way, God loves us always even when we act unlovable.

A Child’s Steps to Jesus is a series of books written to help parents explain to their children in simple terms what it means to have a relationship with God. In the back of each is a parent’s guide which aids parents in encouraging children to know God, with tips such as making worship time a happy experience and letting your child see you pray out loud during the day.

Linda Porter Carlyle simply and tenderly teaches children the loving nature of God through the comparison to the love and enthusiasm young children have for their pets. The author’s simple and clear sentences combined with Mary Rumford’s large, colorful, and attractive illustrations reinforce this lesson of God’s love and mercy.

♦ Quality - 3  ♦ Acceptability - 5

Susan Robinson
Librarian, Newtown, Delaware County Christian School
Newtown Square, Pennsylvania


TJ is looking forward to pizza with olives. When the bank’s automatic teller is out of service, TJ and his mom have to be content with soup instead. TJ’s mom uses this as an opportunity to talk about how not only machines can be out of service but how sometimes people can also be “out of service.” The tie-in of how Jesus wants us to help those who sometimes need help begins with how TJ and his mom deliver groceries to their Aunt Minnie who is a shut-in. When TJ’s mom needs a nap before making dinner he takes it upon himself to help her by preparing a dinner of cereal. Being in service pleases both TJ and his mom.

There are important concepts being laid here—helping others, how not to be frustrated at circumstances beyond one’s control, and the good feeling we receive when we try and succeed in new situations. The parent’s guide gives several suggestions of how we can share the joy of helping others with our child. These suggestions can easily be adapted to the classroom.

♦ Quality - 4  ♦ Acceptability - 5

Mary Jarvis
Freelance Writer
Marysville, Washington


Merry Birthday, Nora Noël follows the two themes of a family waiting for the birth of a new baby while celebrating the Advent of Christ’s birth. Author Ann Dixon describes, in poetic language, the journey of a Christmas baby from conception to birth and the family’s time of preparation for her arrival. Linked with this event are the weeks of Advent, with a candle lit for each week.
A note at the end of the story explains more about the Advent for readers unfamiliar with the tradition and its meaning. The five advent candles represent hope, peace, joy, faith, and love.

The illustrations by Mark Graham are soft, with muted colors in keeping with the style of the narrative. The font used is italic. Each of the lines announcing a new advent candle is highlighted, using a different color to separate it from the rest of the story. However some of these lines, and the beginning letters in some paragraphs, are difficult to read because they blend in with the muted back-ground color of the pages.

This is a gentle story for pre-school age children and should be helpful in explaining why and how Advent is celebrated.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Donna Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon

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By just sniffing the air, Sarah’s Grandpa can tell a storm is heading their way. Big Wind Coming! by Karen English chronicles a rural family’s suspicions, preparations, encounter, and clean up after an extensive wind storm. Elementary age Sarah tells the story, expressing many normal fears and questions that children would have in the face of a natural disaster. The watercolor illustrations by Cedric Lucas add wonderfully to the feel and even the texture of the storm.

Well written with enough mild suspense to hold even adult readers, who will wonder what damage the storm will leave. Some of the character’s dialogue contains slang words like, “gonna.” This use of a rural dialect is not excessive or distracting, but seems natural for this story and its characters. Sarah’s grandma tells her several times that they are not in control of the storm, or what damage it does. The lesson that God is in control may be comforting to elementary age children, but preschoolers may find the storm (and future storms) frightening. While this story is especially about a wind storm, it could be applied to other natural disasters that would be more likely where the reader lives.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington

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“Grandson, when I was a young man ....” Grandfather relates how he gleaned his living from the sea. As the two generations go through their day the old grandfather passes on the wisdom of his years to the young boy at his side. He cautions the child to remember what he has taught. Sadly, feeling he is of no use to anyone, the old man goes to bed to sleep. His dreams are colored with a giant turtle and the bird who had helped him fish. To his surprise the turtle and bird in his dream tell him he has much yet to teach his grandson. He awakes with hope in his heart.

Brenda Lena Fazio has eloquently taken inspiration from a Japanese poem for this beautiful story. Her enchanting water color illustrations bring this simple tale to life. A lesson of love and caring is taught for both an older and younger generation. A child will want to be late because the last duck always gets a spank. However, one afternoon he is head down, underwater, chasing a little fish and doesn’t hear the call. Instead of being last and getting a spank, Ping hides for the night on shore. The next day he searches everywhere on the river for his family. A little boy catches him; the family delightedly plan for a duck dinner. But the boy secretly releases Ping, right next to his own boat. Although he is late, this time Ping takes his spank and is safely reunited with his family. This is a satisfying conclusion to a fun book.

The sunny, colorful illustrations are almost full-page, with just a few lines if story below. The English-Spanish versions are almost identical, making it easy to use them together. Since the story follows the classic pattern of character introduction, choices, problems, resolution, it could be used as a pattern book for student authors.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Lynn Harding
Librarian, Snohomish County Christian School
Lynnwood, Washington

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The Story About Ping by Marjorie Flack and Kurt Wiese was first published in 1933. This classic tale, republished in Spanish under the title La Historia De Ping, will delight Spanish knowledgeable young children when it is read to them. Grade schoolers who are studying Spanish might like to compare the English and Spanish versions. High schoolers taking Spanish could read it for themselves.

Ping is a young, attractive duck who lives on the Yangtze River with his family and sixty other relatives. Daily they all leave the boat for the river bank to eat. In the evening the Boat Master gives his call and all the ducks walk up the gangplank, back to the boat. Ping doesn’t ever want to be late because the last duck always gets a spank. However, one afternoon he is head down, underwater, chasing a little fish and doesn’t hear the call. Instead of being last and getting a spank, Ping hides for the night on shore. The next day he searches everywhere on the river for his family. A little boy catches him; the family delightedly plan for a duck dinner. But the boy secretly releases Ping, right next to his own boat. Although he is late, this time Ping takes his spank and is safely reunited with his family. This is a satisfying conclusion to a fun book.

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◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Mary Jarvis
Freelance Writer
Marysville, Washington

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The connection between age and death makes Harriet very concerned for her grandpa as he is getting old as well. Grandpa reassures Harriet that all things that live will eventually die, but those that love God will be with him in heaven. He uses examples in the garden to demonstrate the new life we will have when we’re in heaven.

Jan Godfrey’s book is a gentle introduction to a difficult topic of death. Having Grandpa talk about the subject is very comforting because he presents death as very natural, not fearful. The watercolor illustrations by Jane Cope are full of warmth and color adding to the secure words of the text.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Sally Kuhns
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


While trying to create a special Christmas gift for his granddaughter Katie, the candymaker has an inspired idea. He will make her a special candy, one that tells the true story of Christmas. In Helen Haidle’s *The Candymaker’s Gift* the candymaker dreams of not just sharing this candy with Katie, but with all the village children. As he shapes the candy sticks, the candymaker thinks of the staff the shepherds used when they went to see Baby Jesus. As he paints on the red stripes, he thinks of the blood Jesus shed when he died on the cross. Katie is delighted with the new candy treats, and the candy cane is born.

The illustrations by David Haidle are the perfect accompaniment to this gently written legend. The characters look their part and match their loving personalities well. Included at the end of the book are ideas for family activities, Bible verses that will enhance the candy cane legend, decorating tips, and easy holiday recipes, involving candy canes, of course. A nice addition to any family’s Christmas tradition or library of holiday books centering on Christ.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington


Balloons, ice cream, cake, and a piñata! That’s the formula for a great birthday party in, *Hooray! a Piñata* by Elisa Kleven. Clara’s birthday is coming, and she and her friend Sampson have gone downtown to choose a piñata to fill with candy. Sampson votes for a giant monster thunder cloud, but Clara decides on a small, rainbow colored dog. She clutches the dog tightly, and begins to think of it as being real. She feeds it, takes it on walks and rides in the park, and even totes it to Grandma’s house and gives it a ride on the merry-go-round. Samson warns her to be careful and keep it safe for the party, but Clara assures him it will be fine.

On the day before the party, Sampson and Clara are making paper hats for the party to guests to wear. “It’s going to be sad when we stuff that pinata with candy and break him,” says Sampson. Clara begins to cry and says she does not want him broken. Sampson wants to get Clara a real puppy for her birthday, but her mother is allergic to dogs and cats. Then Sampson gets an idea. On the day of the party, Sampson arrives with a big surprise for Clara, and the party is a great success.

*Hooray! a Piñata* is a lot of fun for young readers. It is the perfect combination of reality and make-believe that children can relate to, and descriptions: “the worried rustling suddenly stopped. Bear’s paw had the comforting smell of muffins and cocoa.” Together they slowly coax the shy newcomer from his paper bag, and the mystery is solved.

Pictures and text work together to bring the animals to life. The peaceful tone makes *Something for James* appropriate bedtime reading. Neil Reed’s colorful artwork with gentle lines will appeal to preschool and kindergarten listeners. Older readers may be more interested in the story than the illustrations. The boy, James, does not have as much detail given to his expressions and actions as do the animals. Elephant is an endearing character, as are Bear and Something. All five senses are engaged as the story unfolds—the sights and hiccups of Something, elephant’s trunk and thoughts of a terrible fierce pouncer, and the calming effects of Bear’s paws and wise advice.

*Something for James* has a satisfying ending, right down to one of Something’s paws still being a little damp. The scene fades from colors to shades of gray, an abrupt but effective change of mood. Earlier in the book, Elephant’s mental image, black and red, of a fierce “pouncer,” may bother younger children.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Tracie Mabry
Freelance Writer, Parent Volunteer
Vancouver, Washington


Shirley Isherwood hooks her young audiences with the very first sentence, “One day something arrived in a brown paper bag for James.” But what has been left for James? And when will James discover what it is? The young boy’s animal friends enter in whole-heartedly to find the answers, and the reader is drawn in with vivid


it also provides a gentle lesson in how to be kind to friends and neighbors. Sampson’s character portrays friendship in a way that will be inspiring to young readers, and in a way which parents would be happy to see their children emulate.

Kleven’s illustrations are lively, colorful, and happy. Their childlike spontaneity will bring out the creativity in young artists, and will make this book a favorite for a long time. Included is an author’s note on the origin and use of pinatas, which makes this book useful as a learning tool as well.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Virginia. Schnabel
Freelance Writer
Shelton, Washington


Hardbound, $15.99. K - Gr. 3.

“Once upon a time there was a place called Sam-sam-sa-mara, where the animals and the people lived and worked together like they didn’t know they weren’t supposed to.” Sam, the hero of this tale, goes shopping for school clothes with his parents, Sam and Sam. Outfitted in his new finery, Sam sets out for school. Soon, he is stopped by a tiger, who threatens to eat him up. Sam trades his new coat for his life. He meets a succession of tigers, until he is left crying and wearing only his underwear. The tigers begin to fight amongst themselves and Sam outsmarts them, reclaiming his clothes.

If you ever secretly mourned the disappearance of that charming tale, Little Black Sambo, into the oblivion of the politically incorrect, you won’t want to miss this retelling. Julius Lester uses a southern black storytelling voice that sings with warmth and humor. His use of simile is as golden as the pool of butter on Sam’s pancakes. His use of simile is as golden as the pool of butter on Sam’s pancakes.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Cathleen Sovold Johnson
Freelance Writer
Des Moines, Washington


Colorful illustrations accompany words that toddlers are learning to identify and say in the books, I Can Say Apple, I Can Say Blanket, I Can Say Boat, and I Can Say Teddy. Each page has only one word on it, for a total of twelve words per book. The author, Ann Locke, has selected words that children just learning to talk can say. These words are common enough that small children can also locate the representation of the word on the page. Most of the words are objects such as cat, tree, and chair. There are a few concept words like play, big, and wet.

At five and one-half inches square and made as board books, these are the perfect size for little hands to hold. The illustrations by Louise Batchelor are clear and uncluttered. There are no backgrounds or extraneous details to confuse toddlers trying to point out the correct object.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington


Froggy has difficulty adjusting to his first day at school. He even dreams the night before that he attends school in his underwear! Preparation and interest shown by Froggy’s parents reinforces family interaction. Illustrations are not particularly attractive. The story line by Jonathan Logan is rather frothy and it probably would not become a child’s choice for a second read.

Light and humorous. Perhaps kindergarten teachers would find this book appropriate to read to new pupils.

◆ Quality - 2  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Barbara Goy Taenzler
Freelance Writer and Book Reviewer
Glennwood, Iowa


A black and white cat meets a warm reception when he wanders into a church yard one November day. The staff and Sunday School

children adopt him, naming him Leo the Magnificat. They take good care of him and he lives at the church for twelve years, taking part in all the church activities.

Everybody loves Leo the Magnificat. He brings two lonely people together and later attends their wedding. He befriends homeless people and the Sunday School children. After twelve years, Leo is old and tired and in pain. The pastor announces the vet is going to give him a shot to help him die peacefully. They have a funeral for Leo where the people talk about how much he meant to them.

Based on a true story, Leo the Magnificat tugs at the heart strings of cat lovers. Preschoolers are delighted when the reader mimics Leo singing along with the choir during the church service or interprets the “Mrrow” when Leo returns after his all day taxi ride. They also might enjoy seeing Leo on the table at the potluck dinners.

Beautiful full-color illustrations in watercolors and gouache. By Caldecott Medalist Emily Arnold McCully, fill every page and add interest to the story. Her illustration of Leo’s face on the hard cover of the 9 1/2 x 10 1/2 inch book is vibrant and appealing. The quality of the art work would make it a valuable resource in an art class.

Ann M. Martin has written an entertaining story which will appeal to any age, especially kindergarten through grade two. However, it lacks something in take-away value. One thing that disturbs me slightly, although probably due only to the association with daily newspapers, is the announcement of Leo’s impending death. Since identification with Leo as a member of the church is so complete by this point, the Pastor’s announcement that the vet would give him a shot to “help him die peacefully” struck me as advocating “mercy killing.” Of course, this may be appropriate for a cat, but I wondered if a child might think it is appropriate also for old people who are tired and in pain. It is a sad commentary on our times that this idea would even occur to a reader.

◆ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Judith M. Gonzales
Freelance Writer
Moses Lake, Washington


Imagine a Parisian boarding house full of traveling entertainers. Resourceful Mirette helps her mom run this boarding house, listening to the entertainers and keeping her heart open. One evening the sad, retired high-wire walker Bellini becomes a resident at the boarding house. When Mirette looks out into the courtyard and sees Bellini walking on air she asks him to teach her how to become “Mirette on the High Wire.” But

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Barbara Goy Taenzler
Freelance Writer and Book Reviewer
Glennwood, Iowa

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Bellini has a tragic secret. Even as Mirette gains courage and expertise, Bellini faces a dire crossroads in his life. Wonderfully, Mirette’s courage, talent, and love help Bellini face his fear and return to his career.

Mirette on the High Wire is set in the Paris of a hundred years ago. Both author and illustrator, Emily McCully’s happy, active watercolors reflect this colorful era, yet timelessly fit into the reader’s understanding. Full of action and excitement, the story and pictures, working in tandem, encourage the reader to identify with Mirette and Bellini as they learn to understand and appreciate each other.

The real life wire-walker Blondini is the model for Bellini. Several of Blondini’s exploits are recreated in word and picture. A collage of little girl daredevil Emily McCully and all the adventurous girls who will read this book forms the intrepid Mirette.

Mirette on the High Wire also explores tenacity in learning, friendship, daydreams, and helping each other. Emily McCully won a Caldecott Honor award for this book and has won the Christopher Award for her work as both writer and illustrator.

Donna Eggett
Freelance Writer
Maiden, North Carolina


“If you were my bunny and I were your mama,” moves into “If you were my bear cub and I were your mama” in similar fashion to cat, dog, and duck. The last section says comfortably, “If you were my baby and I were your mama, I’d pull the covers up to your chin.” Affirmation of mother’s love flows from every page in If You Were My Bunny, a superb together-time book mothers and their children will enjoy over and over. Not only do the words enchant, but McMullan suggests putting them to familiar tunes she lists on the final page.

David McPhail’s full-color, double-page illustrations will keep children’s eyes busy while they listen. His captivating drawings, extending to the book’s front, jacket, and inside cover pages, have details and color that interest readers of all ages.

As a bedtime book or as an anytime book, If You Were My Bunny will surely become a favorite.

Betty M. Hockett
Freelance Writer and Writing Teacher
Newberg, Oregon


Willy and Phil are two dogs who live with their friend Bob on Bank Street. Bob cleans windows all over town and on the weekend he washes the two dogs. Willy, a labrador retriever, doesn’t mind a bath but Phil, a warm-weather, bow-legged mutt hates water. Every Sunday he tries to avoid his bath. He hides under the bed or pretends to be sick. One time in August, Phil jumps through an open window and takes off as fast and as far as he can. Soon he is in a place he has never seen before. He finds himself in an enormous park and plays fetch with kids and anyone who will throw a stick. Someone feeds him. Then he spends a long night in the park, lonely and missing Bob.

In the morning Phil starts for home. But he doesn’t know how to get back. Days pass into months. The weather becomes cold and wet. No one comes to the park to play or feed him. Sometimes Phil thinks he hears a truck like Bob’s, but it is always someone else’s truck. One freezing afternoon, a man in a truck comes to the park and lets out a pretty, clean dog named Rosebud. Phil plays with his new friends Frank and Rosebud. Frank takes him home and puts out notices for a found dog. But Bob doesn’t come to get Phil. Weeks pass and more snow falls. Finally one day Bob sees a flyer and leaves a message on Frank’s answering machine. Frank calls Bob and returns Phil. Now Phil takes a bath every Sunday and then goes with Bob to the park to catch sticks with his friends Frank and Rosebud.

This tale will hold the interest of children to the last sentence as they identify with a pooch who doesn’t like a bath and is lost from his beloved friend. Colorful illustrations by John Sanford capture the delightful personality of this beguiling mutt. Simply, but vividly told, this story is one children will want to read many times over.

Betty M. Hockett
Freelance Writer and Writing Teacher
Newberg, Oregon


Uncle Jed came by Sarah Jean’s house every Wednesday night to cut her daddy and Granddaddy’s hair. He was the only black barber in the county and traveled to homes to cut hair. His dream was to someday have his own barbershop with four chairs and a big red-and-white barber pole outside. Sarah Jean loved to sit on his lap and hear how he was saving up for his own shop. He had been saying the same thing for years and nobody believed him. Black people didn’t have dreams like that in those days.

One morning the little girl became sick. Her parents took her to the hospital and learned she needed surgery which would cost three hundred dollars. Her daddy didn’t have that kind of money. Uncle Jed provided the money from his savings and started saving again. The Great Depression hit and the bank failed when he had almost enough saved up for his shop. He had to start all over. Finally on his seventy-ninth birthday Uncle Jed opened his barber shop and people flocked to it from all over the county. Not long after that Uncle Jed died, a happy man. He made his dream come true even when no one else believed in it. He taught Sarah Jean to dream, too.

James Ransome’s vivid illustrations bring this stirring story to life. This award winning book captures the dreams and struggles of ordinary people caught in the segregation of the south. Told from the viewpoint of a girl growing up in the era before civil rights, it shows the courage of the human spirit. It also speaks today of dreams realized through hard work and perseverance. Uncle Jed’s Barbershop is an appropriate way to introduce children to some of the social problems of our culture and a positive incentive for change.

Mary Jarvis
Freelance Writer
Marysville, Washington


Pictures, more than words, paint the Circle of Seasons as Gerda Muller, author and illustrator shows the reader the cycle of the year. Although she was born in Holland and now lives in Paris, children of all countries will identify with the events depicted, with the weather, and with each landscape as the year unfolds.

The sharing of this book will produce memories of past experiences as well as encouraging...
One day David hears a tap on the door and opens it to find a beautiful large old rocking horse with colors are created as the creatures’ paints drip and dribble into one another. The book ends with a four-page pull-out spread wherein the creatures, however, will appeal to the youthful imagination. And this, of course, is the point. For while children often make the process of learning look like child’s play, there are times when a bit of entertaining packaging makes the lesson easier to swallow.

But this is old news, and most library shelves are well-stocked with books intended to make counting and color identification fun. With this in mind, it must be said that the counting book does not really offer anything new. The reader counts from one to ten, along with creatures who swoosh, woosh, and tip-toe around oversized digits.

The Crazy Creature Colors book, on the other hand, does offer an original approach. The reader is introduced to three creatures, each representing a primary color. As the book progresses, new colors are created as the creatures’ paints drip and dribble into one another. The book ends with a four-page pull-out spread wherein the creatures go crazy with their paint pots.

These robust books will bear up to repeated readings and the stickiest of fingers.

The Hand-Me-Down Horse is not only a charming story, but also is useful for teaching children to love America and to sympathize with immigrants who long to come here for a better life. Marion Hess Pomerance has dealt sensitively with the tragedy of the Jewish people under Hitler. The book can be a good stepping stone to a history lesson of that period, and also to teaching that prejudice is wrong. The value of generosity is shown by the hope the horse brought to a small boy. Colorful paintings by Joanna Yardley illustrate each page and help us “see” the life of this family. An interesting epilogue provides background information about Holocaust survivors.

The Hand-Me-Down Horse


David Solomon is a little boy whose family has to hide during World War II because they are Jewish. Now that the war is over, they hope to move to America. While they wait, David’s aunt Rachel teaches him English words about things he will see and do there. He cries when she goes on ahead, but she promises to help his family get to America, too. He continues learning the words she gave him, putting them up on his wall. Eventually he gets discouraged and takes them all down, thinking his “Liberty ship” will never come.

One day David hears a tap on the door and opens it to find a beautiful large old rocking horse with a note on it. It is his if he promises to give it to another child when he leaves. David names his horse “Liberty.” He and his friend Martha spend many enjoyable days riding it, pretending to be soldiers or sea captains or to ride the horse across the ocean to New York City. When David’s family gets to go to America, he gives his horse to Martha. On the ship, David’s mother gives him his treasured box of English words. They have a joyous reunion with Aunt Rachel and live happily in their new home. David learns many new words as well as lots more about America. One day, Martha appears at his door and says, “Look. Liberty helped me, too!”

The Hand-Me-Down Horse is not only a charming story, but also is useful for teaching children to love America and to sympathize with immigrants who long to come here for a better life. Marion Hess Pomerance has dealt sensitively with the tragedy of the Jewish people under
outlive her. Her wing-finned old car is “Betsy,” her high-backed chair is “Fred,” the iron bed is “Roxanne,” and the one-hundred year old house is “Franklin.”

Her somewhat comfortably arranged life is disturbed one day by a small brown puppy who appears at her gate. He continues to come each day and the old woman becomes more and more fond of him. She does not risk naming him, however, for fear of outliving him and having to lose another friend.

When the dog stops coming to the gate, she is distraught. A phone call to the dogcatcher’s kennel reveals little because so many brown dogs are there. Upon arriving at the kennel, she is asked to give the dog’s name. The old woman realizes she must name the dog, and in the process, makes a decision to risk being hurt again in order to have the dog. She decides on the name “Lucky” because she remembers how lucky she has been to have had so many friends in the past. She takes Lucky home in a happy-ever-after ending.

The Old Woman Who Named Things gently presents the situation of many older people and the pain of losing friends, while at the same time providing a wonderfully entertaining story. The concept of “lucky” versus “providence” or “blessing” would need to be brought out with younger readers.

In the illustrations, Kathryn Brown gives the old woman distinctive personality through her slightly exaggerated features such as her high coiffure and old cowboy boots she wears. Each page is worth studying for the marvelous incidental details that endear the reader to the old woman.

◆ Quality - 5  ★ Acceptability - 4

Arlene Neal
Teacher, Covenant School
Granite Falls, North Carolina


Delia loves music, in fact, Delia hears music wherever she goes. And wherever she goes in Charleston, South Carolina, she finds music in the raindrops, her mother’s laugh, a rusty, squeaky gate, the wheels of the milk wagon, and wheeze of a horse. She finds music in the hammering of the carpenters as they work with a “Whomp, bidda-bay! Whomp, bidda-bay! Come six o’clock we quit our day.” This book with its enticing oil on canvas illustrations by Bernie Fuchs, is chock full of sounds and shouts inspired by the everyday life of this pre-World War II city.

In an Author’s Note, Alan Schroeder bemoans the passing of the vendors’ songs from the everyday life of our cities. In Carolina Shout! he has attempted to record for history’s sake this part of our vanishing cultural history. A good follow up project for our children might be to have them listen to the common sounds in their own town and neighborhood and write a shout for them.

◆ Quality - 5  ★ Acceptability - 5

Judy Driscoll
Christ the King Academy
Poulsbo, Washington


A granddaughter and her grandfather spend some special time together in Brenda Seabrooke’s book, Looking for Diamonds. Although Amy loves the long evenings by the fireside, sleeping in the softest bed with Grandmother, and the extra big country breakfast, the best of all comes when she takes her morning walk with Grandfather. Sometimes they find frost diamonds, and other times there are dew diamonds, but on this visit Amy has only found a piece of quartz which Grandfather says is only almost a diamond.

However, just as the searchers come back, Grandmother is on the back porch, and they find a special surprise. The ending will delight young readers and inspire them to look for special adventures with their own families.

Nancy Mantha has illustrated each page with water colors, giving a magical appearance to both the early morning search and to the special evening adventures as well. The illustrations complement the text so well that the listeners will be able to see the story unfold as they hear it read. This is an excellent story to encourage special relationships between the generations.

◆ Quality - 5  ★ Acceptability - 5

Marie Knapp
Retired Librarian
Monmouth, Oregon


In a heart-warming story of sharing and friendship, George Shannon’s Heart to Heart graphically depicts how to give from the heart on Valentine’s Day. The day does not start well for Squirrel. Receiving a big valentine from Mole in the mail should be special, but Squirrel has been so busy he has forgotten. He is not prepared to give Mole a valentine when he comes with a cake for lunch. Action-packed illustrations follow as Steve Bjorkman shows Squirrel’s frantic rush to create a valentine for Mole.

The exclamation, “Wait! Better yet—he’ll never guess I forgot,” follows each wonderful discovery Squirrel makes until his frantic search for scissors almost dooms the project to failure. Then the reader will be charmed by each discovered memory of times Squirrel and Mole have shared. And just in time, the most meaningful valentine is ready.

This fast moving, action-packed story will be treasured by all young readers and story-tellers alike.

◆ Quality - 5  ★ Acceptability - 5

Marie Knapp
Retired Librarian
Monmouth, Oregon


Who cannot relate to a teacher and a class of eager kindergarten students, all busy preparing for the first day of school? Each one prepares their clothes and their lunches, bids farewell to the familiar preschool life and sets off to bravely face a new world. But this class is different. Miss Bindergarten is a very typical teacher who has a special outfit for the first day of school, a car full of decorations and boxes of manipulatives and activities to fill her classroom. As she sets up the room, her helpful pet parrot is by her side. The unique thing about Miss Bindergarten is that she is a lovely black and white dog, and each of her students is a different animal. There are twenty-six students and each of their names as well as the name of the animal that they are, begins with a different letter of the alphabet. As they are introduced, in alphabetical order of course, we also see how they and members of their family are getting ready for kindergarten. Adam (the alligator) wakes up. Ian Lowe (the iguana) says, “I won’t go!” and Lenny Loome (the lion in a wheelchair) says, “Vrooo-vrooo-vroom!”

The clever illustrations are bright and attractive and have tiny details that will draw children to pore over each one. Teachers, parents, and
children will have special times together as they find the hilarious details in each picture. Before kindergarten begins, children will want to read this book to find out what they will do when they get there. After the first day, parents can use the sequence of events to entice their child to tell about the events of their day. And later children will tell the story of their first day as they review again and again the joy of finding new friends and the excitement of learning.

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten is pure fun from the title page where Miss Bindergarten’s cuckoo clock delivers a message of “Rise and Shine” to the last photo page with each student’s name and animal family name. In fact, I am ready for the next Miss Bindergarten book. I certainly hope there is one on its way.

◆ Quality - 4   ❤ Acceptability - 4

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


It is the first time Lena and her parents have gone crabbing since her older brother’s death. The memory of Rob is very painful to the family. Just the mention of his name is difficult. The three of them try to be strong and pretend that nothing has changed.

The boat trip in the lonely, still night is an opportunity for the family to begin the healing process. Lena finds an old sweatshirt of Rob’s. The feel of the warm sweatshirt makes Lena feel his close presence through her memories of other times they have gone crabbing as a family. On the way home in the early morning light, Lena sees the sadness on her parents’ faces.

Wanting to share her special memories of Rob, Lena asks her father to pull the car over. She then spreads Rob’s sweatshirt over the three of them.


◆ Quality - 4   ❤ Acceptability - 5

Susan Robinson
Elementary Librarian
Delaware Co. Christian School
Newtown Square, Pennsylvania


At the beginning of Black Like Kyra, White Like Me, Christy has three best friends; Matt and Julie live in her neighborhood, and Kyra takes gymnastics at the youth center with her. Christy, Matt, and Julie are white. Kyra is black.

Wishing that she and Kyra could spend more time together, Christy tells Kyra that the house

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next to hers is for sale. Looking for a safer neighborhood, Kyra’s family soon moves in. Immediately trouble begins. Matt and Julie aren’t allowed to play with Kyra or with Christy anymore, and then tires are slashed and yards are trashed. Christy can’t understand why everyone in the neighborhood doesn’t like Kyra’s family when they’ve never met. Even her own parents have their own subtle prejudices that confuse Christy. At the end of the book Christy has only one best friend, someone she discovers who is a true friend.

Effectively told through Christy’s eyes, Judith Vigna captures the anger and confusion that kids can feel when caught in a situation that is difficult to understand. The illustrations help convey the feelings of the characters and are pleasantly drawn in watercolor by the author. There are a number of stereotypes present throughout the book (i.e. blacks living in bad neighborhoods, whites living in good ones) and a mention of a kid getting shot. There is no mention or demonstration of forgiveness, loving one’s not-so-nice neighbor, or explanation of why one should be friends with people of different races.

◆ Quality - 4     ❤ Acceptability - 3

Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington

The illustrations in this paperback book are very colorful and will appeal to young children. The illustrations have a cartoon quality.

Perhaps the most appealing is the prince’s coach being pulled by two large grasshoppers.

The story is predictable. The villagers get their ‘comeuppance’ and Happy Mole is rewarded with a new home in the prince’s valley.

◆ Quality - 3     ❤ Acceptability - 5

Donna E. Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon


In the style of the old well-known nursery rhyme, “This is the house that Jack built,” readers of all ages will enjoy the unfolding of the story of life in the heart of the forest as the tree waits for the seed “which fell from a height,” to become the sapling “standing upright,” under its spreading branches.

Tim Vyner’s The Tree in the Forest is beautifully illustrated with impressionistic backgrounds of leaves and vines and colorful native life as each animal enters the repeated saga. Inside the back cover is a short description of each one of the forest family that becomes part of the repetitious jingle. Not only are the frog, snake, monkey, cat, sloth, tamarinds, panther, toucan, and beetle seen in their natural environment, but the life cycle of the tree is depicted in a colorful way.

Younger children will enjoy the repetition and older readers will appreciate the glossary inside the back cover.

◆ Quality - 5     ❤ Acceptability - 5

Marie Knapp
Retired Librarian
Monmouth, Oregon


Gina, a picture book by Bernard Waber, tells the story of the title girl, Gina, who moves into an apartment house where there are boys, boys, boys, from Alvin to Zbignew. Boys, but no girls her age to play with. In fact, her only friend seems to be her cat, Paloma. Gina does not enjoy girl-things like shopping; she is interested in other activities like drawing space creatures and collecting pictures of sports stars. Gina finally makes an inroad into the male world when she tells Nate (or was it Joe?) that she can throw a baseball, and does! And Gina is at last accepted for her ball-playing prowess. Then, with an odd twist on the theme, the first day of school comes, and Gina’s mom helps her tom-boy get ready for The Big Day: an emerald green blouse and two fat braids. Will the new image be tolerated?

The highlight of Gina is the drawings. Although the book is cleverly written in rhyme, the basic premise is called into question. Gina is appreciated for her ability, not for her character.

◆ Quality - 3     ❤ Acceptability - 4

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington


Once in Blueberry Dell by Dawn Watkins combines elements of a biblical parable and a classic fairy tale. The main characters are a village of moles awaiting a visit from their prince. Everything in Blueberry Dell must be perfect for his visit. When a tired miller in a dusty wagon threatens to spoil that perfection, the villagers insist that he find lodging in the next town. Only Happy Mole is willing to care for the stranger and make him welcome in his own home. When the prince finally arrives, the villagers learn that he came to their village the previous day disguised as the miller and only Happy Mole made him welcome.

The illustrations in this paperback book are very colorful and will appeal to young children. The text is printed on colored pages with white borders. The illustrations have a cartoon quality.

The text invites you to recall your first visit to a large public building, the overwhelming size, the amplification of the sounds. Shelly, the younger sister, is the narrator. She matures much in her understanding and accepting the hearing impaired over the course of the field trip, acceptance and creative thinking to help rescue the trapped Seth. The author manages this without judgment or censure.

The vocabulary used in The Spelling Window and the story-line allow for a wide range of ages and interests.

◆ Quality - 4     ❤ Acceptability - 5

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington


What happens when the deaf boy from next door is invited on a field trip to the state capital? Will he speak too loudly and at the wrong times? Will he go places that are off limits and get stuck in the elevator? How will the world of Shelly and Kathy be big enough to include Seth? There is a start to finding solutions, and it’s called The Spelling Window, written with compassion and insight by Dawn L. Watkins.

The illustrations by John Roberts have a watercolor feel, warm and accepting like the text. The spelling window of the title is introduced early, showing the older sister Kathy signing to the across-the-alley neighbor, Seth.

The text invites you to recall your first visit to a large public building, the overwhelming size, the amplification of the sounds. Shelly, the younger sister, is the narrator. She matures much in her understanding and accepting the hearing impaired over the course of the field trip, acceptance and creative thinking to help rescue the trapped Seth. The author manages this without judgment or censure.

The vocabulary used in The Spelling Window and the story-line allow for a wide range of ages and interests.

◆ Quality - 4     ❤ Acceptability - 5

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington
The illustrations by Christian Birmingham are outstanding and add depth to the story by depicting old England and the mood and feel of the storyline. The cover showing an apprehensive Oliver appealing for more food in the workhouse is an excellent choice as it compels the reader to open the book and find out more.

❤ Quality - 5 ♥ Acceptability - 4

Sally Kuhns
Teacher, Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


Kevin and Kim are ten-year-old twins in this story by Kevin Gire. But Kim has normal intelligence, while Kevin is mentally handicapped. The story follows Kevin’s adventures and point of view but also explores some of Kim’s feelings of embarrassment and frustration with her brother.

Their first day at a new school is particularly trying for both of them. On the way home from school their school bus injures a puppy. When the twins are let off at their stop, Kevin goes back to help the injured dog. Kevin and Kim wrap the dog in Kevin’s jacket and take him home with them. The twins are allowed to keep the dog and Kevin forms a strong attachment to the pup.

In an exciting scene in which Kevin is trapped by an angry bear, his dog, Wiggles, leads rescuers to the boy with his barking and distracts the bear in a crucial moment, saving Kevin’s life.

The author writes a humorous and moving story around Kevin’s strengths and weaknesses. When tragedy hits the family, Kevin’s love reaches each of them with the gifts and notes he has tucked away for them in empty oatmeal boxes.

This is a well-written, fast-paced story with excellent characterization. Readers of many ages will enjoy meeting Kevin and seeing life through his eyes.

❤ Quality - 5 ♥ Acceptability - 5

Donna Brown
Church Librarian
Portland, Oregon


Donald Hall has done an excellent job weaving this tale of Willard’s three encounters with his hero, Babe Ruth. Willard’s father’s comments about politics and major league baseball help set the story in its rightful time in America’s history.

The first meeting takes place by accident—Babe Ruth’s accident in his speeding roadster on Willard’s road. Willard’s father pulls him out with the tractor and Babe Ruth gives Willard a baseball glove. A year later, Willard and his father travel to Boston to hear President Wilson and spend the afternoon at a Red Sox game.

Between games, Babe Ruth spots Willard along the fence and gives him a ball to go with his glove. Seventeen years later, Willard and his father take Willard’s daughter Ruthie to see the Boston Braves and her namesake, Babe Ruth, play ball. Babe Ruth autographs Ruthie’s scorecard and tells her that if he hits one today, it’s for her birthday. In that season opener Babe Ruth hit his 709th home run.

Vivid watercolor illustrations by Barry Moser on every other page of book help readers visualize this delightful story of a boy’s love of baseball.

Although not a biography of Babe Ruth, much information about him is given within the narrative. Babe Ruth uses profanity each time he speaks with Willard. This could be distracting to the Christian young person who has been shielded from this type of language. However,
by leaving out the profanity, this book could be read aloud and enjoyed by boys and girls who enjoy baseball.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 2

Patricia Perry
Librarian
Northside Christian School
Westerville, Ohio


Twelve-year-old Angela goes on vacation with her family to her grandmother’s house in a small town. In taking care of her great-grandmother, Angela learns to deal with some of the same questions and loneliness. Jericho is the name of the town as the great-grandmother knew it, and the story moves back and forth in time between present day and long ago. Angela’s days are portrayed in present tense, which is awkward to read and causes the story to drag. The great-grandmother’s reminiscences are much more tightly written in past tense. At first these switches in tense are distracting to the reader.

Janet Hickman’s main characters are well developed as the story progresses. There are quite a few people, and some are referred to by more than one name, which is confusing. Descriptive phrases are used to bring the drama to life: “She tries to ignore the sun, which seems to grow brighter by the minute, striking once on the back of her head and a second time in her eyes as it glares off the first white page.” Not as much detail is given to physical descriptions of the members of Angela’s family, however.

A clear inset within a less defined scene on the cover attracts the reader’s eye. The description on the back cover may not catch the intended audience’s attention, but is helpful for parents and other adults recommending books. Readers in the third and fourth grades may be confused by the changes in time and setting. Children with older family members will relate to Angela’s difficulties in dealing with her great-grandmother.

Jericho’s shifts in time enable readers to realize their situations are not unique, and may encourage children in upper middle grades to inquire about their own family history.

◆ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Tracie Mabry
Freelance Writer
Vancouver, Washington


Isaac Jackson takes a fresh look at bridging the differences between friends, in Somebody’s New Pajamas. This story features two black boys in an urban setting who discover they can be friends despite obvious income differences. At first, Jerome is intimidated by the expansiveness of Robert’s home, his nice clothes, and even the fact that Robert wears pajamas to bed. But, by accepting their differences and embracing his own family’s way of doing things, Jerome transcends his insecurities.

In his writing, Jackson treats both families with a deliberate respect: the rich child is not better than the poor, just different. And those differences are not bad, just part of the flavor of “who we are and the way we do things.”

David Soman’s illustrations give this book flesh and blood and emotion. In a delightful study of facial expression and body language, he captures the heart and soul of Jackson’s story. Soman paints believable boys with a wonderful mix of innocence, affection, and mischief.

Jackson has turned out a good story for teaching mutual respect and self-acceptance. By the final scene, you’ll feel you’ve met these families somewhere and liked them very much.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Tammy Perron
Freelance Writer
Snohomish, Washington


Danger at Outlaw Creek sees Jessie helping an old friend on a movie set in Arizona. Set in the Depression, Jessie struggles to trust God in the midst of her many hair-raising adventures. Brave but quick-tempered Jessie contends with a self-centered child-actress, a gang of suspicious town kids, evil scoundrels, explosions, and an exciting train wreck. Improbable, but quick-moving, the story will satisfy a young mystery lover.

An eye-catching cover depicts Jessie handcuffed to her friend, and will attract eager readers. References to Jessie’s faith are interspersed throughout, and eventually lead to her learning that, in spite of her doubts and dangers, the Lord never fails. The story makes its point without being preachy or interfering with the plot. Light, but entertaining.

◆ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Cathy Bittner
Librarian, Cascade Christian School
Tacoma, Washington

Kate O’Connell is known to family and friends as “Curious Kate.” Her curiosity leads her, her brother Anders, and his friend Erik, to pursue and solve mysteries in and around their small town in Wisconsin. The year is 1907.

In The Vanishing Footprints Kate learns that the Creamery checks for the area’s farmers have been stolen. Many families, including her own, depend upon those checks. Kate, Anders, and Erik set out to help find the checks. While ice fishing, the trio sees a mysterious object floating under the ice. Snagging the chain with a fishing line they pull the object to the surface and discover a sealed milk can containing all the missing checks. Hiding the can, in the bushes the friends go for help. But when they return, the milk can has been stolen again. Now the thief knows who they are. Kate and Anders soon begin finding threatening messages written in the snow outside their home.

Author Lois Walfrid Johnson writes a good mystery story for young readers while providing interesting insights into the turn of the century life in the farming areas of northeast Wisconsin. Some of the practices she describes are: ice harvesting, butter making, and tapping sugar maple trees.

Each book in the series contains an independent story with background detail from previous stories to help a new reader catch up on Kate’s life and family.
In Trouble at Wild River, Kate and the boys join a family of Chippewa Indians in making maple syrup and candy from the sap of sugar maple trees. On their way to the trees they see a man changing the ownership marks on logs that are ready to go downriver to the sawmill. They can’t see the thief’s face but know that they must report this so that he can be caught. Shortly afterward Kate’s mother receives a letter from her youngest brother, Ben. Ben was caught stealing in his native Sweden and ran away. Now he’s in America and longs to see his family. Will he be welcome? Could he be the timber thief that Kate, Anders, and Erik decided to find out?

In The Mysterious Hideaway, the story of Kate’s Uncle Ben continues. Although older and taller than the teacher herself, Ben enrolls in Kate’s school so that he can learn English. On the first day of school Kate hears a strange noise in the schoolhouse but is unable to tell where it’s coming from. Is it under the floor or above her in the rafters? Could someone be hiding up there? Kate, Anders, and Erik decide to find out.

In Grandpa’s Stolen Treasure, Kate’s grandparents from Sweden are scheduled to arrive in Wisconsin on the train. When the train arrives, her grandparents are not on it. Kate’s father and her Uncle Ben immediately go to the train’s last stop to find them. But a later telegram informs the family that Grandpa is in the next city, Duluth, and that Grandma is missing! Can Kate, Anders, and Erik get to Duluth and help Grandpa find Grandma? And is she really lost or has she been kidnapped?


Did you ever wonder what it might have really been like to come across to America on the Mayflower in 1620? Especially if you were one of the children who made that trip? Kathryn Lasky shares insight into that momentous journey through the journal writings of Remember Patience Whipple, a young girl who was twelve years old at the time. Each entry reveals more than just the gradual unfolding of that piece of our history. It takes you there to the turbulent days at sea, carries you through the impatient days of waiting off shore until an adequate settlement sight can be found, leads you through that desperate and tragic first year of sickness, hunger, and death, and finally introduces you to the glimmer of hope that the helpful Indians brought through food and practical advice. The journal entries also reveal the buoyant personality and character of the young Pilgrim girl and her friend, Humility.

A Journey to the New World is written with all the freshness and vitality that a child can put on paper. It views all those familiar events anew through the eyes and the young language of a child who was there. Who else could make a game out of seasickness, or speak to her journal as Imp, a personal friend, or have the boldness to approach the Indians with naivete curiosity?

It is very difficult with this book to discern how much is fiction and how much is straight from Remember Patience Whipple’s diary. I appreciated the epilogue that takes the story further and reveals what happened to Remember after that shaky beginning in America. It was the epilogue that stated the fact that her diary was discovered in 1850 by her great-great-great granddaughter. There is also a section that talks about life in America in 1620, and how and why the Pilgrims came to be here at all. There are some maps and diagrams that add credence to the story.

This book, a simple collection of journal entries from, “October 1, 1620 Morning Mayflower 1150 miles sailed” to “November 10, 1621 Plimoth Settlement,” is a refreshing slant on an all too familiar story, a book that will hold the attention of most any child, and enhance any teacher’s history unit that deals with the Pilgrims and the settling of America.

In Mandie and the Schoolhouse’s Secret, Lois Gladys Leppard’s continuing saga, thirteen-year-old Mandie Shaw returns to her grandmother’s house after finding the metal box containing her father’s will. Mandie is thrilled because the will gives her possession of her father’s old house. Mandie must keep away from school until it is certain she’s not coming down with measles. She longs to get back to school to see how the modernization work is coming on the school building. The workmen have made holes in the building for the new wiring and central heating. Now Mandie and her best friend Celia are afraid mice will come into their room through the holes.

While searching for Snowball, Mandie’s cat, the girls make a startling discovery. Scary noises, secret doorway, and hidden rooms all combine to reveal the schoolhouse’s secret.

In Mandie and the Courtroom Battle, Mandie’s stepmother claims to have Mandie’s father’s true will. So Mandie and her friend Joe are off on another adventure to make sure she gets her inheritance.

The Mandie series is best read in sequence. Set in the early 1900’s, the series faithfully shows the lifestyle of the period. Negro servants speak in dialect which may be difficult for young readers to understand. The simple plots carry no particular spiritual message, although Mandie quotes her favorite scripture verse once in each book. These charming little mysteries will appeal mostly to the younger end of the age spectrum even with the dialect.
Vibrant watercolor illustrations portray an autobiography of an ancient oak tree in Austin, Texas. From an acorn almost 500 years ago to the present time, the tree shares bits of its history. A legend relates that the tree was named “Treaty Oak” after Stephen Austin and Native Americans leaders met under its leaves.

The oak introduces the reader to early Native Americans, Conquistadors, American settlers, Mexican Americans, and cowboys. In little glimpses, history comes alive and the tree stands tall. Unfortunately less than ten years ago, someone deliberately poisoned the ancient tree, and most of the tree was destroyed. People from all over the world have donated to help keep Treaty Oak alive.

An attractive, readable presentation, The Tree That Would Not Die would be an excellent supplement to any American history unit.

Cathy Bittner
Librarian, Cascade Christian School
Tacoma, Washington


The story of Balaam, which Katherine Paterson retells here, is found in the Book of Numbers. Balaam is a Moabite soothsayer, summoned by his king to pronounce a curse against the people of Israel. The king had dismissed these former slaves of Egypt as insignificant until they defeated Amorites. Now he wants some slaves of Egypt as insignificant until they continue. Soon, however, the donkey swerves off the path. Three times Balaam is forced to beat the animal, who finally demands, “Why are you beating me? Haven’t I always served you faithfully?” Then Balaam’s eyes are opened, and he perceives the angel brandishing a mighty sword.

Balaam would gladly return home after these astounding miracles, but the angel tells him to continue on and warn the king not to oppose the Israelites. The king ignores Balaam’s words and makes war on God’s people. When the battle goes against him, he demands that Balaam curse the Israelites, but Balaam can only speak the words God gives him. He pronounces a final blessing, which includes a prophecy of the Messiah, and abandons the foolish king.

Paterson, who won a Newbery Award for A Bridge to Terebithia, is at the top of her storytelling powers here. She recounts Balaam’s adventures in language easy enough for young listeners to understand, while making the leading characters real enough to appeal to older readers. Koshkin’s illustrations are vividly colored and richly detailed. The facial expressions are contemporary, while the costumes and background give the book an antique air. The cover and binding are strong, a quality production all the way.

The rich-colored watercolor, tempera, and gouache illustrations by Russian artist Alexander Koshkin complement the story well. However, they draw heavily on Egyptian and Assyrian images, including a few depictions of their gods.


Outcasts, strangers, and those of low social status are Katherine Paterson’s heroes who reveal the spirit of Christmas to others. The twelve contemporary short stories in A Midnight Clear: Stories for the Christmas Season were originally written for the author’s husband, a Presbyterian pastor, to read to his congregation on Christmas Eve.


Many of the stories have a character who has a bad attitude toward Christmas, but experiences a change of heart at the end. This change is often brought about by unexpected sources. In “The Desperate Search,” Ben learns the meaning of giving when a poor family seeks shelter on a cold winter night. A rich, old woman, Rosamond, and a poor boy, Buddy, learn in the “Star Lady” that even rich people need to know “God loves you! And you have friends in the world!”

Paterson’s characters vary in age, and each has his or her own quirks, relational troubles, and voices. The colorful stories reflect cultures of rural New England, the American South, urban United States, Cultural Revolution China, and Latin America. For each story, Paterson provides warm, but not sappy, endings. The spirit of Christmas—hope for the future and kindness to our fellow men—fills each story. Though the author occasionally uses a little Scripture, even mentions Christ’s birth, these stories are more akin to A Christmas Carol than to the biblical message of Christmas.

Lorinda K. F. Newton
Freelance Writer
Editor, Northwest Christian Author
Kirkland, Washington


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❤ Quality - 4 ❤ Acceptability - 5

In Book 1, *The Overland Escape*, as Hildy returns to her mountain home on a hot June afternoon, twelve-year-old Hildy Corrigan is shocked to discover that the house is deserted and her family, gone. Her stepmother, four sisters, and a baby brother have left their rented home in the depression era, Ozark mountains and disappeared, leaving Hildy behind.

Hildy and her cousin, Ruby, race to Hildy’s grandmother to try and find out where the family has gone. Eventually they learn that Hildy has been abandoned by her step-mother and betrayed by her grandmother. The two girls set out on a cross-country trip to try and find Hildy’s family before they move on and are lost completely. Complicating the girls’ journey is a menacing mountain man hired by Hildy’s granny to bring her back.

Hildy and Ruby must not only escape their pursuer and make their way across country during the Great Depression, they must also reach Hildy’s family before they leave for California.

Author Lee Roddy writes a fast-paced story for eight to twelve-year-olds filled with exciting adventures for Hildy and Ruby. Through a series of narrow escapes and desperate prayers, Hildy rediscovers a faith in God that she had nearly abandoned after her mother died.

In book 2, *The Desperate Search*, Hildy has been reunited with her family. Now they must make their way cross-country to California before her father loses the job that’s waiting for him.

Though they try desperately to get there in time, upon arrival Hildy’s father learns that his job has been given to another man. Now the family must find a way to survive in a strange place in the midst of the Depression. Hildy is faced with the hard facts of the Depression. Not only are jobs scarce and families homeless or hungry, she also sees bigotry and families separated because parents can’t afford to feed the children they have. The author has woven a wealth of detail on the Great Depression into this story. Compiling the stories of many individuals he brings this time period to life for the reader.

In book 4, *The Secret of the Howling Cave*, Hildy is accused of stealing the gold watch she wishes her stepmother to see for himself. In book 13 of the *Ladd Family Adventure* series, the Ladd and Catlett families have just moved to Alaska from Hawaii. Josh and his best friend Tank, both twelve, can’t wait to explore their new home, the land of the midnight sun.

On his way to Tank’s house, Josh hears a neighbor yelling at a boy. Josh later finds the boy, named Alex, crying and mumbling to himself that his Uncle Bill didn’t want him, and someone named Louie might find them. Josh and Tank try to befriend Alex, but his uncle tells them to get lost. The next day, the boys discover that Alex and his uncle have disappeared.

As he wonders about Alex, Josh also struggles with his relationship with his father. Mr. Ladd works long hours at his new job and has no time for Josh, not even to go on the fishing trip the Ladds and Catletts had planned. Josh’s disappointment lessens when he picks up a newspaper left on the plane that carried him and his friends to the Alaskan Bush for their fishing trip. From a news article, Josh figures out that Alex and his uncle are running from a gangster named Louie. The boys then make another discovery. Alex’s uncle is the fishing lodge’s new cook! Josh and Tank invite Alex to go fishing with them, and he reluctantly joins them.

Hunted in the Alaskan Wilderness reaches its climax when a ten-foot grizzly bear and Louie, who wants to kill Alex and his uncle, trap the boys along a river. Remembering the encouraging words Josh had given him earlier, that God keeps his eye on the sparrow, Alex makes a mad dash to get help. A gunshot from the fishing guide frightens the bear away, and the gangster is apprehended. Alex discovers that his uncle does truly love him, and Josh’s father arrives to explain that being with his son is more important than any job. As Hildy's family once again threatened by the hard times of the Great Depression. If the family moves on in search of work, Hildy will have to leave the home and friends she's found. One of those friends, a rancher named Ben Strong, has been having trouble with rustlers. Will Hildy and her friends be able to help Ben?

The book contains several relational and emotional struggles mixed in with the action-packed scenes. The spiritual lesson, however, appears late in the novel and seems tacked on. Throughout the novel, Lee Roddy skillfully weaves in specific information about Alaska and provides a glossary of terms at the end of the book.

who at first ridiculed Josh as a cheechako, a newcomer to Alaska. Tyler then befriends Josh when their survival on Terror Island depends on each other. At the end, all the children are friends.

This page-turner novel offers action and some wilderness-survival information as well. Roddy also includes a glossary of terms at the back of the book.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability-5

Lorinda K. F. Newton
Freelance Writer and Editor of Northwest Christian Author Kirkland, Washington


If you are familiar with R. C. Sproul’s message of holiness in his inspirational books for adults, you will recognize that theme in The King Without a Shadow, his first book for children. In a style similar to David and Karen Mains’s tales, Sproul creates a mystical once-upon-a-time kingdom set sometime in the past. The king of this kingdom is queried by a young boy as to where “shadows come from” and where shadows “go when they leave.” The king’s wise men answer these questions accurately according to the physical properties of light, but the king wants to know how to get rid of his own shadow. They assure him that this would be impossible, although they tell him of a Great King who has no shadow.

The king goes on a trek to visit a prophet who tells him about the Great King without a shadow who is God. The king returns to the castle, summoning the young boy with his brother and sister back to the court. He then answers the boy’s questions about shadows and proceeds to tell the children of the Great King. He charges them to seek this Great King who would help them “never worry about shadows again.”

This book is laden with subtle symbolism that young children may or may not comprehend. As a read aloud book, discussions of the shadows representing sin (God being the only One without a shadow) and other concepts could be quite effective. At one point the king marvels that his face in the mirror is actually a reverse image and that he can never “see himself as others see him.” The spiritual implications of this and other passages are quite significant.

Appropriate for this book, Liz Bonham’s impressionistic paintings effectively communicate a sense of light and shadow in the illustrations.

The story line bogs down somewhat in the extensive discussion of light as the king and his wise men discuss scientific principles; however, the overall message of God’s sovereignty and holiness does communicate well.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Cathleen Sovold Johnson
Freelance Writer
Des Moines, Washington


Who could forget the story of Heidi, a little orphan who is rudely deposited into the care of her reclusive grandfather, high in the Swiss Alps. Heidi finds great happiness living with her grandfather and roaming the high meadows with Peter, the goatherd. Then, as abruptly as she was brought to the mountains, she is taken to live in the wealthy Frankfurt home of the Sesemann family. Here, she is to be a companion to twelve-year-old Clara, an invalid. Now Heidi, who has been used to running barefoot with the goats, must learn to adapt to an entirely different lifestyle in the city. A wise grandmother teaches Heidi to pray, and counsels her in understanding God’s ways. When she returns to the Alps, Heidi’s faith brings spiritual healing to her grandfather.

Having read the book as a child, seen the movie, and read it at least twice to my own children, I was nevertheless caught up as I read it again, even reading through tears as the grandfather reentered the church he had abandoned so many years before.

Written by Johanna Spyri and originally published in 1880, Heidi has become a beloved children’s classic. This edition, one of The Whole Story Series, is illustrated with watercolor paintings by Rozier-Gaudriault. In addition, the book is filled with photographs, line drawings, and paintings in color and black and white, which amplify the text. With its clear print and abundance of illustrations, this edition is a book that will be reread and passed on to future generations. It is a perfect cuddle-up and read-aloud book.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Arlene Neal
Teacher, Covenant School
Grantsville, North Carolina


Seven tender stories of parents learning to love their children through unique but in many ways ordinary situations. Seven promises of a loving Heavenly Father who longs to teach earthly fathers and mothers how to: protect, pray for, love, forgive, be there, tell the truth, and show the way home to their children. In many ways these seven stories are as much for parents as for their children. At the end of each story is a pledge for parents to promise to their children. These promises are meant for parents to remind their children of their continuing love just as God reminds us of his everlasting love in the eternal promises of his word.

The book begins with an explanation from the artist about each of the paintings that introduce story. Ron DiCianni has again poured his heart into each painting, introducing the reader to the characteristics of Jesus. Each painting perfectly complements the stories of promises.

This book can provide a bridge between parents or teachers and children who are hard to reach. The writing style will appeal to young and old. The other books in the series are Tell Me the Story and Tell Me the Secrets by Max Lucado and illustrated by Ron DiCianni.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

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


Davey and his family have been homeless for almost two years since the paper mill closed, leaving his mother without a job. While Mom works to master a new job and older brother Anthony searches for work, Davey’s job is to do well at school and stay out of trouble every day.
until eight o'clock. That's when the shelter opens and his family can be together.

Davey's job is not an easy one. It's warm in the market, but storekeepers aren't always welcoming; libraries are warm, but be careful not to fall asleep while reading. When it's finally time to walk to the soup kitchen for dinner, it involves passing by three big guys dealing drugs in doorways. After eating, Davey goes out into the darkness to walk to the shelter and Anthony joins him with good news of a job.

Someplace to Go presents a view of homeless persons that could generate discussion and lead to greater understanding, but could also generate fear. The portrayal is stark and chilling: “I used to have another brother, Michael, ten years older than me. I didn't know him too well, and then he got killed.” The story does end on a positive note, with the family together and hopeful of better things ahead.

Realistic watercolor illustrations add to the somewhat fearful tone of the story; one illustration depicts Davey standing alone in the dark, looking back over his shoulder, with a look of concern.

◆ Quality - 3     ❤ Acceptability - 4

Cathy Bittner
Librarian, Cascade Christian School
Tacoma, Washington

Gr. 3 - 8.

William Small, the twelve year old Captain’s apprentice on the Mayflower, is a character invented by author Kate Waters to give a dramatically accurate account of the famous voyage of 1620. Although William is a fictitious character, the facts of his life are common to a young ship’s apprentice of the time. The story begins as William, looking back at England’s shore, admits to being excited and a bit afraid on this his second voyage. However, there is much work for the crew and William has his jobs to do with Captain Jones. William satisfies his curiosity about the unusually large number of people in the hold during this particular crossing of the ocean when he meets a young passenger girl about her daily duties. Ellen tells William why she and the other Pilgrims are on the Mayflower. A storm comes up the crew has more work to do, and below deck a new baby is born. Land is sighted, a harbor is found, and the passengers set out to explore their new world. After Ellen and the other passengers leave the ship, the Mayflower, with William, the ships’ apprentice, sets sail again for England.

Kate Waters has done an excellent job creating a story about life on the Mayflower with the information known about navigating and shipboard life in the seventeenth century. Her book contains thirty-nine full color photographs to illustrate the story taken by Russ Kendall on board the Mayflower II, a reproduction of the original Mayflower. For those who desire to know more, Kate Waters has included five pages of information about the original Mayflower, its reproduction, the 1620 voyage, personal information about the two children photographed as William and Ellen, and a glossary.

◆ Quality - 5     ❤ Acceptability - 5

Patricia Perry
Librarian
Northside Christian School
Westerville, Ohio
BOOK REVIEWS

CHILDREN’S NONFICTION


Sharing a Bible story with a young child is a special event. In The Big Book of All-Time Favorite Bible Stories, 150 stories are written in an easy to understand format. Authors V. Gilbert Beers and Ronald A. Beers used the New King James Version of the Bible to retell these beloved stories from the Old and New Testament.

In the front of the book is a listing of each story title with its scripture reference and the page number the story is located on. Each story is one page long and is brightly illustrated on the facing page. The illustrations, by Daniel J. Hochstatter, appear to be watercolor and ink. The characters have expressive faces, the background simple, and the choice of scenes pictured is excellent. In the story, “The Good Samaritan,” the Samaritan is pictured carrying the unfortunate Jewish man, who had been attacked. A donkey seems to be watching. Quotes by Jesus and other characters make the narrative more interesting.

An index containing key names and words follows the story section. “A Word to Parents” is a special message from the authors about the importance of directing children toward good role models and not to follow bad examples.

Preschool children through grade five will enjoy sharing these short stories. Parents will appreciate the emphasis on heroes and good role models for their children. These stories can also effectively be used as an introduction for a Bible craft project at school, church, or daycare. The index makes particular stories easy to find.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Anita Utley
Faith Christian School
Mead, Washington


Helen Haidle uses a question and answer format to cover the topic of angels. The answers are a combination of scripture, Bible stories, and accounts of people being ministered to by angels in contemporary times. Some of the many questions answered are: Who are angels? Would it be fun to see an angel? Can animals see angels? (Remember Balaam’s donkey?)

The author also addresses the questions of whether we should worship angels or pray to them. In a culture where the worship of angels is on the rise, the scriptural answer given is no, our praise and prayers go to God alone. The subject is covered very thoroughly in a well thought-out and well designed layout with soft watercolor illustrations by David Haidle.

Although Angels in Action is written with children in mind, it would be a helpful resource in introducing the subject with an older audience as well. There are scriptural references within the text that could be used for a Bible study on angels. It will appeal to many beyond its target audience.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Sally Kuhns
Sylvan Way Christian School
Bremerton, Washington


Today we celebrate a feast. A holiday for man and beast. We think of every friend who speaks In barks and purrs and roars and squeaks. So begins Judith Gwyn Brown’s book Bless All Creatures Here Below.

Many churches, particularly in the liturgical tradition, offer services of blessing for animals; mainly, but not exclusively, pets. These services are often held around the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi (Oct. 4). Perhaps because he wrote the “Canticle of the Sun” (which we sing as “All Creatures of Our God and King”), Francis has become something of a patron saint of animals and the created world.

In the same vein as Francis, Brown has crafted a worshipful hymn-story of the animals. Brown presents her hymn text as a read-along story. Her delightful illustrations are at once witty and humorous. In bright, colorful pictures she portrays the gamut of the animal world from mail-clad Medieval dog to contemporary rollerblading squirrel. But the pictures do more than entertain—they show how children might prepare for a service of blessing for the animals.

Then, the hymn is presented as a hymn, with music by Herbert Draesel Jr. Lastly, there’s a sample service order with readings from Genesis, the Psalms, and the Song of the Three Holy Children. Appropriate prayers conclude the service.

Bless all Creatures Here Below is a joyful celebration of those creatures that God has entrusted to our care.

Children age three to seven should be enchanted with the story and pictures. Sunday School teachers and worship leaders will find the book helpful for planning and performing a service of blessing for animals.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Andrew M. Seddon
Physician, Author
Billings, Montana

Jelly Belly jelly beans, everybody’s favorite, and they’re for sale, one for a penny at this neighborhood stand! Luscious color photographs brighten the cover and interior of this photo essay and money counting book, *Jelly Beans For Sale*, by Bruce McMillan.

Brilliant is the only word that can be used to describe the intensity of color in these photographs, which save the book from being what might have been just another dull exercise in counting out money.

While the simplicity of McMillan’s text and photographs makes the book a visual standout, without the aid of real money and jelly beans as hands-on manipulatives, readers will find this book to be a bore. There just isn’t enough action in the photos to stimulate a child’s imagination or curiosity, and the simple addition problems are solved for the reader.

The best part of the book comes at the end, where information is given on the history of jelly beans, and on how they are made. It also provides a brief history lesson on jelly beans in the White House and in space, during President Reagan’s term in office, and includes information on how to obtain a free jelly bean kit for classrooms. This kit sounds like a lot of fun!

♦ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Virginia Schnabel
Freelance Writer
Shelton, Washington


Lao Lao has a special talent. She brings pleasure to her neighbors and friends by taking “a thin sheet of paper and the small pair of scissors that she kept in her front pocket,” and while she cuts, she sings “Fold it and cut it and turn it around Open it up and see what you’ve found.” Her beautiful Chinese paper cuttings thrill the reader. The greedy emperor hears about the beautiful Chinese paper cuts. “She can make anything.” he is told. Finally exhausted and very cold, she shuts her up in a high tower and demands that she toil day and night to make him the most beautiful gift in the world. The emperor is pleased and the dragon is introduced, the dragon is interwoven between the text, drawings, and paper cuts. This is one of the most beautifully published folktales I have ever seen. The layout authenticates the story and the use of black and white, mixed with color, is very effective. There is a page explaining Chinese writing followed by a simple lesson in making Chinese paper cuts.

This book is a beautiful addition to the library of any teacher who incorporates a unit on Chinese culture or folktales. The magic dragon is an ever present detail in Chinese literature and opens the discussion for belief systems. Who do we trust when we are afraid? Who do we call on in an impossible situation. The ancients may have believed in or feared the dragon, but we have a great God who is ever-present and all knowing.

♦ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 4

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


This book is a collection of twelve Christmas fairy tales from around the world. Some of the stories are humorous and some of them are sad; but all of them will leave you with a feeling of wonder and joy. They portray the essence of Christmas. Three of the stories are written by Hans Christian Andersen who virtually invented the modern fairy tale. His thought provoking stories include: “The Fir Tree,” “The Last Dream of the Old Oak Tree,” and “The Book of Fairy Tales.” Some of the other fairy tales included are Frances Browne’s “The Christmas Cuckoo,” Ruth Sawyer’s “Schnitzle, Schnotzle, and Schnootzle,” Alf Proysen’s “Father Christmas and the Carpenter,” and Mary de Morgan’s “The Story of a Cat.” This collection would not be complete, however, without the most classic of all fairy tales “The Nutcracker.”

Neil Philip has created a beautiful Christmas collection in this book. He sought to find tales that would cause you to stop and consider the inner meaning of the story, yet at the same time truly appreciate the joy and hope of Christmas. Philip also includes a nice variety of authors from different backgrounds. In the introduction he has given the background of the stories and the authors which wrote them. Isabelle Brent has captured the magic of these stories in her illustrations. Each tale is accompanied by a watercolor, and every page tipped with gold leaf. This is a hardback book with a sturdy binding. The magic of Christmas seems to shimmer with a seasonal glow from this book. Christmas Fairy Tales will make a nice addition than can be enjoyed by the whole family.

♦ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Marcia Snyder, Librarian
Valley Christian School
Missoula, Montana


*Backyard Bugs* captivates viewers with colorful, detailed photographs of forty bugs enlarged against a white background. Each tiny feature is vividly portrayed. The photographer and author, Robin Kittrell Laughlin, shares her skills and makes these bugs beautiful and appealing, rather than frightening and repugnant. The bugs might be found in a backyard, a garden, or even a house. See charming spiders, wasps, grasshoppers, ants, and more. Each entrant in the book is introduced with scientific name, habitat, and as a personal find. Short amusing literary excerpts add flavor to each selection.

The book includes eight pages of scientific background which explain the phylum Arthropoda and the various classes chosen for this edition. A short glossary of terms concludes the book. This is a book that children will reach for again and again just to view the superb photography. Somehow each subject seems to have been caught with an amusing look on its face! This is not a book that answers questions such as lifespan, predators, or life cycles, but rather a book that might challenge the viewer to go the library to find out more about the funny creatures presented.

A short introduction by Sue Hubbell mentions “millions of years” in connection with insects and peoples, but this does not detract from the book’s excellence.

♦ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Paula Stewart
Principal, Morning Star Christian School
Bend, Oregon
interaction between the skills of each side in analytic, and verbal (left brain). Most people are artistic and intuitive (right brain) and the linear, different styles of thinking: the emotional, warms, alerts, and monitors life's situations. The brain is also a guardian for the brain. It educates, personal identity and links yesterday to today. It is memory that gives a human being a sense of their discovered inside the brain. For example, memory is what gives us a sense of their discovery. Scientists continue to be amazed about what they have discovered inside the brain. The Brain is a wonderfully clear and concise study of what has been described as “the most complex thing we have yet discovered in the universe.” This is one of a series of several books in the Overview Series. An excellent, hardbound book.


In this superior book explaining the miracle of being human, the brain has been called the most complex matter known to humanity. Author Jim Barmeier has organized the text in a very concise and informative way. He has made a very complicated organ understandable and interesting.

It is stated here that what is known today about the inside of the brain is the result of decades of hard work, scientific discovery, pure accident, individual accomplishment, and strong teamwork. Part of the brain’s map has been drawn so far. But there is still much to be done. Scientists continue to be amazed about what they have discovered inside the brain. For example, memory is what gives a human being a personal identity and links yesterday to today. It is also a guardian for the brain. It educates, warms, warns, and monitors life’s situations.

Science has found that human beings have two different styles of thinking: the emotional, artistic and intuitive (right brain) and the linear, analytic, and verbal (left brain). Most people lean to one side or the other but there is constant interaction between the skills of each side in everyday life. Preference is influenced by family, heredity, and society. Our skills come from the preferred hemisphere. Our failings come from the less dominant side. A well-rounded person uses both sides equally well.

Sleep research is discussed. The average person sleeps twenty years of his life, so the study of sleep is an important part of research on the brain. Different stages of sleep have been discovered, and beneficial sleep patterns are necessary for good mental health.

In a few short decades, science has gone from having only a few traditional tools to peer into the brain to being armed with sophisticated computers and million-dollar brain scanners capable of detailing the smallest portions of living cerebral tissue. Michael Phelps, the designer of the PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scan, summarized the future of the brain and technology: The explosion of knowledge in brain science is equal to our ability to probe outer space — we have the techniques now to probe the inner space of the body.

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Looking for a book to introduce simple machines to a young audience? How Do You Lift a Lion? by Robert E. Wells does just that, using “the problem” of lifting a lion to introduce the lever, explain how it works, and the natural force of gravity to overcome. Pulling a panda is used to explain wheels and friction, and delivering bananas to baboons to explain pulleys. The illustrations depict two children experimenting with these simple machines. The machine components and other pertinent information, are labeled as they demonstrate the machines in action. The drawings and text are informative and a glossary of terms in the back of the book add to its value as a reference book.


Hope Irvin Marston’s Fire Trucks is a children’s guide to fire fighting and fire safety. The author begins her book with full descriptions of each kind of fire truck, why it is used, and what kind of fire fighting equipment it carries, from hoses to ladders. Even fire boats and planes are pictured.

The dangerous and hard work of fire fighters is explained with examples given of the different kinds of responsibilities a fire fighter has from handling hoses, checking equipment, to taking part in races as part of their practice in preparing to fight future fires. The interest of history of the original purpose of Dalmatian dogs as mascots plus photographs of a historical as well as futuristic fire truck add an unique touch to this guide.

Fire Trucks also teaches children some practical tips in fire safety such as dropping and rolling if their clothing is on fire, or checking the door for heat, and crawling. Hope Irvin Marston is responsible in repeatedly mentioning the dangerous work of fire fighting as well as explaining fire safety tips so that children will understand the seriousness of fires.

The author’s large color photographs add to the appeal of Fire Trucks. Larger groups as well as individual children will enjoy studying the photographs of each type of fire vehicle plus better understand fire safety from the photographs of children demonstrating rolling, checking a door for heat, and crawling.

Hope Irvin Marston has written an useful as well as attractive guide to fire fighting which will stand out from the many books on this topic. Fire Trucks will especially be a helpful resource for teachers during fire safety week.


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Jonathan London has expanded the traditional verse, “I see the moon and the moon sees me. God bless the moon, and God bless me,” making a whole day based on this simple rhyme. Beginning with, “I see the sun,” in the morning, and ending with, “I see the moon and the moon sees me, hello moon will you dream with me?” a child’s entire day is covered. Colorful and vibrant, the illustrations by Peter Fiore enhance the peaceful, calm tone set by text. Preschoolers and younger will enjoy hearing the verses again and again. Older children will also like this soothing quiet time book and may even be prompted into thinking up their own simple verses.

❤ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Elizabeth Coleman
Freelance Writer
Tumwater, Washington


We have all heard of the mighty Mississippi River, but do we know where this mighty river goes?
actually begins? It begins as a clear stream that flows from a lake called Itasca. Legend says it springs from the tears of an Ojibway maiden made to dwell beneath the earth. If you hop in your canoe and follow this stream you will sneak through miles of pine and birch tree. You may see a great blue heron looking for fish or a doe and her fawn getting a drink. You will not see people however; it is very quiet and peaceful here.

Sanna Anderson Baker, through poetry, takes her readers on a visit to a place still unknown to many, the head waters of the Mississippi. This is an area in which she grew up and which is very familiar to her. Baker has included a map and brief history of the area and the Ojibway people who once claimed this area as their home. Painter Bill Farnsworth makes this book come alive to the readers. His paintings cover every page and give you sense of peace and stillness as you read. The package is made complete with a sturdy library binding. This book will make a great addition to a study of the mighty Mississippi River.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5
Marcia Snyder, Librarian
Valley Christian School
Missoula, Montana

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio is a first-hand peek into the life of a twelve-year old girl, Peg Kehret, who was stricken with the dread virus polio in 1949. This well-known children’s author’s detailed account of her diagnosis, disease, therapy, and eventual return to school is an engrossing story.
The book opens on an exciting day in Peg’s seventh-grade life, the day of the Homecoming parade at her school. As her school day progresses toward the four o’clock event, Peg develops a headache, muscle cramps, and even takes a tumble in the hallway at school. By the time she heads home for lunch, Peg is feverish and cannot go back to school. At midnight, she is hospitalized and the diagnosis complete: Peg has polio. A disease for which there is no cure!
Peg’s agonizing journey will keep readers riveted to this fast-moving book whose style and length of chapters lends itself well to a classroom read-aloud. Younger children may need reassurance that polio is no longer a concern for them due to the immunizations.
◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5
Karen Orfitelli
Freelance Writer
Manchester, Connecticut

Spending the beginning of her life learning how to adjust to different cultures, Madeleine Albright was being prepared to negotiate with the world. Currently, there are more refugees in the world than any other. Albright understands the feelings of the modern refugees. She and her family lived as refugees after escaping from Czechoslovakia during World War Two.
As the American ambassador to the United Nations, Albright has contact with representatives from more countries than any other American.
UN Ambassador shows approximately a week in the life the American ambassador. Combining a point by point description and color photographs, Albright’s life is described in detail. The photographs are bright and varied giving a good idea of what confronts Albright every day. Along with a biography of Albright is a short description of the United Nations. Although a bit dry, this book would be a good resource for teachers and students. Students who read it should have a idea of what the American ambassador does at the United Nations headquarters in New York.
◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5
Janyre Stockinger
Freelance Writer
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Jaime Escalante, Bolivian born, immigrated to the United States to be a teacher. However, things did not always work out the way he intended. As a child Jaime was inquisitive and full of energy. If he didn’t think a school assignment was constructive, he would create his own project. He just could not sit still with nothing on which to focus his thoughts and energies. After high school and a brief military adventure, Escalante enrolled in college to become a teacher. Half-way through his second year, he was given an opportunity to substitute for a physics teacher who had died suddenly. By age twenty-one Escalante accepted his first real teaching position. He tried to inspire and motivate his students to excel. Early in his teaching career, he developed a lifelong creed: DETERMINATION, DISCIPLINE, HARD WORK equals SUCCESS. Escalante moved to the *S. only to discover his Bolivian credentials were not valid and he would have to start from scratch. After eight years he finally reached his goal and began teaching. Escalante loved his students and with humor and his own unique methods of teaching, encouraged them to aim high.
Ann Byers’ biography of Jaime Escalante is an inspiration to all teachers. Ann has done a beautiful job of presenting Escalante’s life in a dramatic, yet simple style that will be especially appealing to middle school students. Not only is his life an inspiration to teachers, but his work ethic and never give up attitude will be an inspiration to people of all ages. Ann has also included several photos which help to truly capture the character and essence of Jaime Escalante.
This book also contains Chapter Notes, a Bibliography, and an Index. These are especially nice features that are not usually found in biographies. For this reason this would make an excellent choice for a classroom book. This is one in a series of six Hispanic Biographies. It is a trim size, hardback book with a well-constructed library binding. It would be a good choice for any library.
Vincent Van Gogh


Vincent Van Gogh was a great artist and a fascinating person. He was deeply religious and so compassionate towards the poor, that at one point the author tells us that, “dressed in dirty, ragged clothes, he was eating next to nothing, having given away what little money had been sent by his family.” The author handles the difficult aspects of Van Gogh’s life in a non-judgmental, matter-of-fact way, and it works well. The facts are that Van Gogh lived for some time with a woman to whom he was not married, suffered from depression and mental illness, cut off his own ear in a rage, and shot himself to death.

Claude Monet was a man who loved to paint, and as his art reflects, he also loved boats, steam trains, children, and gardens. One of the boats he owned was a studio boat, which was equipped with Monet’s painting supplies, so he could sit out on the river and paint.

Both books in the Art for Young People series are absolutely beautiful. Every page has reproductions of paintings by the artist or his contemporaries, photographs, or watercolor illustrations by Edward Lightfoot. Each book has a glossary, summary information on people important to understanding the artist, and a complete index. Peter Harrison’s narrative in each book focuses primarily on the life of the painter and would be easy for children to understand.


A part of the See Through History series, Ancient China is sure to inspire hundreds of learning more about China, its kings and emperors, farm life, cities, trade, transportation, art, science, inventions, beliefs, and customs. All these and more are explored in detailed text and picture in these forty-eight pages. An interesting trademark of this series are its See Through Scenes created with overlays. Four detailed overlays in this book allow you to see inside a Shang king’s tomb, peek inside a nobleman’s house, inspect the holds on canal boats, and tiptoe around the home of the emperor in the Forbidden City.

Another book in this series, The Incas, allows the reader to explore the 15th century Inca civilization of South America. Subjects covered include homes, clothes, society, art and crafts, travel and trade, government, farming, food, religion, warriors, the arrival of the Spanish, and the Conquest of the empire. See Through overlays allow the reader to explore the islands in Lake Titicaca which were home to the Palace of the Inca and the Temple of the Chosen Women, view the inside of an Inca city house, peer into the Temple of the Sun at Coricancha, and rest in an Inca way station with a unit of the Inca army. This book concludes with a brief timeline and a glossary of unfamiliar terms. Both books are indexed.

Other titles in this series:
- Forts and Castles. ISBN 0670858986.


Did you know that, in two years, Canada will have a new territory called Ninavut? Did you also know that India’s movie industry is nicknamed Bollywood? And did you know a Chinese child has to learn over 2,500 characters to be able to read? Did you further know that, in Poland, the day after Easter is called “Wet Monday” because boys chase girls and try to soak them with cold water or perfume? This trivia and much, much, more are interesting facts you’ll learn through the Exploring Cultures of the World series by Benchmark Books.

Each book explores a different country of the world—their history and geography, their school and games, their art, food, festivals, family life, and more. All these books are beautifully hardbound with superb photography and layout. Maps, facts, glossary, and a bibliography are standard features of each book. Because the writers are careful to be clear and concise without “dumbing down” the information, young elementary readers as well as older junior high and even high schoolers will enjoy this series.

In Canada: Star of the North by Shelly Swanson Sateren, the second largest country in the world is displayed in a beauty that is truly all its own. The multi-faceted diversity of this country, from the Maritimes to the arctic territory, from the many languages to the diversified cultural heritages, are discussed without getting bogged down in trite details. Handled wonderfully, Sateren leaves the American reader proud of her northern neighbors and Canadian friends glad to be Canadian.

In India: One Nation, Many Traditions by Megan Cifarelli, the reader takes a look at this often puzzling country. Because Hindu beliefs not only permeate India’s history and culture but even the Indian’s way of life today, more reservation may be taken with this book on India’s society than with any of the other books of this series, especially for very young children. Yet, the author did a fair and thorough job of helping us see the great diversity of this land—its remote villages, its teeming urban masses, its unique family life, and its great bondage to this religion. Most of all, the people of India, and especially the children, come alive to the reader in this exploration of India and its culture.

In China: Old Ways Meet New by Deborah Kent, the fascinating world of the Chinese unfolds as the reader learns about this ancient civilization which has, even to this day, retained an ancient uniqueness only they possess. Communism and its influence is dealt with tactfully as the problems caused by its control on society are clearly presented. Yet, the complexity of the Chinese language, the colorful people, the unique food, and the exciting yet sometimes strange festivals that comprise this society let us also see a beauty in China. One caution: because Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism affected the Chinese culture so much, all these are discussed. Yet care was taken not to bring confusion. The text simply conveys these influences in a way that seems to limit their power to the culture of China.
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Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten by Joseph Slate, 0525454462, HBB, $14.99.

Mississippi Going North by Sanna Anderson Baker, 0807551643, HBB, $15.95.

Muralis : Cave, Cathedral, to Street by Michael Capek, 0822520656, HBB, $17.21.
In Poland: A Troubled Past, A New Start by Eleanor H. Ayer, the bright and colorful Poles draw the reader into their history, their culture, and their world which was once so deeply shrouded by communism. The harsh oppression of the communists which once controlled Poland seemed only to strengthen the Polish faith and national fervor even more, and we take a look into their hardworking lives both in the cities and in the rural areas far removed from modern life. As a strong Catholic country, religious holidays and traditions are very important. School is the center of childhood so 98% of Poles today are literate! Traditional costumes, dance, and crafts as well as writing and music portray a unique Polish culture throughout the lovely text on Poland.

In Brazil: Many Voices, Many Faces by Irene Flum Galven, the blending of Indian, Portuguese and African cultures creates the Brazilian culture of today. Be it in the favelas (slums) of the large cities or the remote rain forest villages, the unique people of Brazil are presented with clarity. Though the mixture of Catholicism and spiritism is discussed in Brazilian festivals and is often reflected in Brazilian culture, Galven is careful to retain a good measure of educational neutrality as she discusses the touchy areas of spiritism and its mixture within Christianity.


The illustrator of Lucy’s Christmas has set off the text of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address with black and white drawings reminiscent of early works by Leonard Everett Fisher. Comparisons between the two will be made in several areas: media, black and white, strong diagonal lines, and use of shadow. The black and white starkness of the illustrations works well with the 272 words of Lincoln’s address, words which have lived on while those of the main speaker, Edward Everett, are lost to history.

The illustrations themselves are all grounded at the bottom of the and yet seem to move into one another because of the text flow. Facial expressions of the figures evoke the horror of battle and death throes, the devastation of the land, determination to remember the dead, to preserve the Union, and ultimately hope in the future.

Teachers and students could compare this book to period photographs for similarities and could use it along with Russell Freedman’s Lincoln: A Photobiography, or Jim Murphy’s Long Road to Gettysburg. A good addition for school libraries or classrooms.

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

Susan Adderley
Freelance Writer and Former Teacher
International Ministries
Association of Christian Schools International
Colorado Springs, Colorado
BOOK REVIEWS


*A Time To Choose* is a fascinating look into the personal struggles of two neighboring families caught in the middle of Nazi terror. Sixteen-year-old Johannes van der Meer wakes up in the middle of the night to the sound of the air raid sirens, with his family, he huddles in their shelter until the all-clear sirens sound. His Dutch homeland has been under the Nazi regime for more than five years; add to this fact that Johannes’ own father is a known Nazi collaborator and sympathizer. Johannes feels conflicting emotions toward his father and rightly so. Johannes can’t believe his father remains a “party” member after all the Nazis have done to his family, friends, town, and country.

Johannes must face a decision to remain neutral or join in a resistance movement with his neighbor and sweetheart, Sietske. Pressures from the outside draw them both to the underground world of rescuing and saving Jews. Their experiences help bond them together while pulling Johannes and his father further apart. Nearing the end of Nazi occupation, life becomes even more brutal for Johannes. He must face the reality that our choices have repercussions on all those around us.

Johannes takes the Lord’s name in vain once and he swears, perhaps a half-dozen times throughout the book.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


From New York City to the laid-back living of South Carolina, the reader is immersed in the sights, sounds, and “feelings” of life within an Afro-American family in the 60’s. Ten-year-old Beryl Nelson and her older sister, Randy, enjoy a secure home, typical sibling squabbles, and the foundation of a faith in God within their family framework.

But as all families go, life isn’t always perfect, and the day Beryl discovers that Randy has a different father, Beryl feels as if she’s been betrayed and cheated out of a real sister. Everything she views becomes off kilter as this “half-sister” idea taints her view of life.

At first, Beryl tries to establish herself as the number one person of importance within the family since Randy only half belongs. But then she causes real hurt towards her sister, and her unrest and guilt begin to help frame a different view in Beryl’s mind. Finally, after meeting many different relatives at their huge family reunion in South Carolina, Beryl begins to realize that “family” is more than just blood-lines. It’s acceptance and care and lots of love!

Tonya Bolden crafts a finely-tuned story that delves into the inner thoughts and feelings of her characters. *Just Family* offers a good sense of how to work though the less than “picture-perfect” family and arrives at a place of better understanding and acceptance.

This sensitively-written story can be useful for anyone who may be dealing with similar family problems, showing care and love far surpasses man’s imperfections. Those who stay with the story’s soft presentation will be rewarded with a deeper appreciation of their own family.

◆ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


Who are the wolves of the title? Is it the cruel masters like Count Emil and Lemmet the Troubadour, preying on weaker folk? Are they the grey animals in the shadows who howl at night? Are they the peasants who are disenchanted with the army coming through their land, destroying their tender crops? Or, possibly, the Crusaders themselves? Karleen Bradford, in *There Will Be Wolves*, doesn’t answer the questions directly; she leaves that to the captivated reader. Ursula, a daughter of an apothecary in Cologne, Germany, her ailing father, Master William, and Ursula’s friend Bruno join the 1096 Crusade. This holy journey, led by Peter the Hermit, is designed to free the holy city, Jerusalem, from the clutches of the Infidels. With little preparation, and less leadership, the underbelly of society, along with their lords, are swept into the current of history.

Bradford does a masterful job of portraying the eleventh century world, complete with its social problems of drug and child abuse.

The vocabulary of *There Will Be Wolves* can be considered “mature.” A map helps the reader travel the route of this People’s Crusade 1096, the “illuminata” first letter of each chapter in keeping with the manuscripts of the period. The interest level is high, with books of magic, stray cats and witches, swordplay and turbaned riders, pillaging and looting all having a part.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Su Hagger
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington


--- *Barbarians from the Isle*. (Wings of Light; 2.) ISBN 0896931161.

--- *Legend of Burning Water*. (Wings of Light; 3.) ISBN 089693117X.


--- *The Jester’s Quest*. (Wings of Light; 7.) ISBN 1564762734.


Sigmund Brouwer has skillfully woven historical fact and his own speculations into a riveting series entitled *Wings Of Light*. The first book, *Wings of an Angel*, introduces the main character, Thomas, an orphan who has a seemingly impossible goal: to conquer the formidable city of Magnus. Unlike most orphans who lived in England during the early 1300’s, Thomas is educated, and has access to further knowledge. However, when Thomas does reach Magnus, both the reader and Thomas realize the adventure has only begun.

Sigmund Brouwer is a accomplished storyteller. His characters are strong and the plot pace a page-turning delight. One notable aspect of this series is the addition of footnotes and timeline which explain the story more fully. This series
Cally Hunter impulsively picks it up. She’s poor, and the secondhand gifts she’s bought for her daughter seem so shabby. Still, she immediately regrets her action. She’s just out of prison for assisting her brother escape the police. No one believed that he had told her he was running from prison and wanted money for a run to Canada. He warns his brother Jimmy waiting. He’s escaped from prison and wants money for a run to Canada. He follows the thief. The wallet contains a St. Virgin Mary’s prayer, which Grandmother Cavanaugh told the boys to give to their father to help him get well. Brian has faith in the medal he resolve to mail the wallet to its owner as soon as he gets home.

Unfortunately, Brian sees her pick up the wallet. When he can’t get his mother’s attention, he calls a sympathetic detective with her appeal for information. Cally is torn but finally calls a sympathetic detective with her information. The search intensifies for Jimmy and Brian, who retains his trust that St. Christopher will somehow save him. Catherine, Michael, and Grandmother Cavanaugh are at Midnight Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral when the good news arrives that Brian has been rescued by a police officer named Christopher.

With a child as a central character, this story should appeal to readers as young as sixth grade, and Clark’s numerous teenage and adult fans will enjoy it as well. She successfully maintains the suspense, even though we know the end will be a happy one.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Kathleen T. Choi
Retired Teacher
Hilo, Hawaii
in love with the young nobleman’s older sister Theodora. He enters the Aquino family’s service, giving him a ringside seat for not only the political turmoil of the day but the development of Christianity’s first major philosopher.

Thomas’ mother, who like many others in his youth thinks he’s not too bright, plans to buy him the abbacy of Monte Cassino. Thomas, however, prefers to join the Dominicans, a new order of teaching friars with no social standing. She and her other sons try everything to change Thomas’ mind, including locking him in his room and paying a prostitute to seduce him. Nothing works, and Piers helps Thomas escape the family castle and join the Dominican students in Paris.

At the University of Paris, Thomas begins his life’s work, reconciling the philosophical insights of the Greeks and Romans with the Gospel. His reputation spreads. Prince Edward of England becomes his patron. He successfully refutes the Albigensian heresy but is accused of heresy himself by conservative clergy who fear his “modern” thinking. He defends himself before the Pope and his advisors and dies honored and loved by all who know him, his breadth of mind excelled only by the sweetness of his disposition.

de Wohl accomplishes three important objectives in this superb novel. He makes Thomas a real human being we care about. He weaves the philosophical arguments into the plot in a way that both educates and entertains. Finally, he makes the historical background so clear and compelling that we actually worry about the pagan Frederick’s possible destruction of Christianity in Europe. Even the love interest between Piers and Theodora serves the plot, giving insights into the social structure of the time.

High school libraries will find this novel history older students actually enjoy, as will any adult reader who wishes to know more about the development of Christian theology.

◆ Quality - 5    ☀ Acceptability - 5

Kathleen T. Choi
Retired Teacher
Hilo, Hawaii


For librarians fed up with the trends of thin books, thin plots, and even thinner characters, there is good news—Dipper of Copper Creek has been reissued. Newbery Award winning author Jean Craighead George’s gentle story of a boy who discovers himself and the beauty of the mountains is available once again. When the book was first published the year was 1956. Forty years later the story of Whispering Bill and his grandson Young Doug, and all the assorted animal mountain life still holds up. The story unfolds itself at a leisurely pace, and yet there is plenty of suspense to keep a reader turning the pages.

Dipper of Copper Creek is one of those books in the category of classic. Not only is it penned by an award-winning author but it holds up through the years, and it has substance. It is the type of book you find yourself remembering and wanting your own children to read.

Unfortunately, most kids today probably would pass it up. The generation weaned on Sesame Street and video games is used to a “fast and get it over with” sort of entertainment. This is why Dipper should be introduced to them as a read-aloud. The full prose of George’s book is rich, and should be introduced slowly to the systems of children brought up on lean literature. Plan on reading a chapter or so out loud and watch how the descriptive passages are absorbed. Then watch Dipper get checked out. Again and again.

◆ Quality - 5    ☀ Acceptability - 5

Pam Webb
Freelance Writer, Homeschool Parent
Priest River, Idaho


This historical novel set in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, is written for upper grade school readers. It takes place in 1777, the year George Washington and his troops wintered there. Written from the perspective of a young girl keeping a diary, the reader is drawn in immediately with details of a family event. Abigail continues to relate the events of that winter and how the people of the community are affected by the Army’s presence.

Attractively bound and designed, the book will draw the reader’s attention with the title, The Winter of Red Snow. A balance between historical events and characterization is well maintained, and both are smoothly woven into the diary narrative. Historical characters are placed within “families,” or groups of people they have relationships with.

Kristiana Gregory uses her facts and research well. An additional historical note at the end is very helpful in giving reference points within which to place events from the story. Lack of artwork in the text forces the reader to focus on dates and sequence of events; he is free to imagine the scenes in his own mind.

Realistic characters are well placed in relation to each other. The language conveys speech patterns of the period without being overdone, as in “A soldier is here asking for thee, Beth. Hurry.” The Epilogue goes far beyond the scope of the original story, and the reading level of the Historical Note is not consistent with that of the main text. It is difficult to read and does not flow well. One of the greatest strengths of the work is also a weakness. Some diary entries are too brief, and leave the reader wishing for more information. However, the variety in tone with some days having more details than others also makes the book more true to life.

Kristiana Gregory has written a well-paced diary with plenty of human interest to hold the reader’s attention from beginning to end.

◆ Quality - 4    ☀ Acceptability - 5

Tracie Mabry
Freelance Writer, Parent Volunteer
Vancouver, Washington


The Mystery of the Stolen Statue by Tracey Groot is the first book in the new Casey and the Classifieds series for ten to fourteen-year-olds. The irrepressible Casey DeWinter is a dreamer fascinated by classified ads. When she finds an ad offering a $500 reward from a teacher at her high school, she’s too curious to resist. So begins the history and the mystery that leads Casey and her four friends—who eventually become the Classifieds—into more trouble than even Casey dreamed possible.

A young Jewish boy hidden by a Dutch family during the Holocaust and the statue that resulted...
is the story within the story. Based on fact and filled with interesting historical tidbits such as how the Dutch had to eat tulip bulbs during those days of food rationing, this story is perhaps the more poignant of the two. Chapter one begins slowly, because of background detail. Chapter two is where the fun begins—where the reader meets the adventurous side of Casey.

DeWinter’s *Casey and the Classifieds* is a series similar to the *Nancy Drew* series but less materialistic. In these adventures, Casey, age fourteen, rides a bike; when one of the older Classifieds drive, it’s in their parents’ car. Casey isn’t beautiful, rich, or perfect like Nancy Drew—she’s real.

The *Mystery of the Forgotten Fortune* is the second book in the series and could be read alone. Yet reading the first book first clarifies who’s who. It begins when Casey helps her mother collect clothes for a church mission and meets Legendary Mary. When Casey learns Mary’s strange appearance and habits are a result of Alzheimer’s Disease, they become friends. That’s when Mary asks Casey to find Mary’s destiny—a hidden family treasure. Casey promises.

Throughout the summer Casey wonders if Mary’s destiny is real or a delusion from Alzheimer’s as many believe. Yet she remains true to her promise and her new friend even when the other Classifieds hesitate. Ultimately the friends work together, and finding the treasure that quiets Mary’s haunted mind is worth the trouble they stumble into. Groot does a good job at mixing suspense with fun in the final chapter where they actually uncover the treasure.

In addition to the rousing mysteries, the bookcovers would entice any young mystery buff and the series, therefore, would make a nice gift sets.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Ginger McGrath
Freelance Writer
McMinville, Oregon.


**Hardbound, $14.95. Gr. 5 - Adult.**

Don’t be put off by the opening to *The Music of Dolphins* by Karen Hesse. This necessary framework presents the contrast to the poignant tale of the dolphin-girl, Mila. Written in the first person for the most part, Mila introduces us to her world. “Joyful with the coming day, I splash and whistle at the milky sun.” But, this peaceful scene is soon destroyed. A newspaper article entitled “Wild Child Found on Island Off Cuba” quotes Dr. Elizabeth Beck, who becomes Mila’s guardian. “Feral children are an invaluable resource for studying the role language and socialization play in the making of a human being.” The whole character of the book changes, the type face enormous, the sentences simple and short. Dr. Beck and Sandy, Mila’s compassionate companion, are trying to civilize the dolphin-girl and Shay, a girl who has suffered abuse at the hands of her family. The Music of *Dolphins* gradually lets the audience know that Dr. Beck has another agenda, to learn how to speak dolphinese. Is this goal any more worthy than teaching Mila and Shay speech and social skills?

The change of fonts in the formatting of *The Music of Dolphins* is critical to the entering the mind of Mila. The size of the print is a visual clue, also, used to represent the difficulties encountered in learning another language. This book is excellent for sharing with a class as young as third or fourth graders, read by the teacher.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington.


On the lovely South Carolina coastal islands, the Gullah people of West Africa found that their “home” was a place where they could retain elements of their own culture in the vastly different world of wealthy white plantation owners. The joys and sorrows of life on a plantation come to life at Weldon Oaks.

In the first book of the *Weldon Oaks Series, Mornin’ Star Risin’*, Holmes takes a unique view of ante-bellum South through the eyes of the Gullah slaves and their owners. Through the eyes of two young boys, the multi-faceted look into the hearts and lives of both slaves and owners look at the social and spiritual issues of the day.

*Mornin’ Star Risin’* begins the series in the mid 1800’s. Eight-year-old Gilly, son of plantation owner Gilbert Weldon, has grown up interacting with the many Gullah slaves his father owns. Some are friends; others are feared. He is used to telling them what to do. He is used to being the “massa’s boy.” But Gilly soon finds himself a “massa” himself when Zach becomes Gilly’s “property.” Through the activities and adventures of these two boys, a special friendship emerges and lessons are learned.

From sneaking into the Gullah’s forbidden “prayin’ grounds” to the realities of runaway slaves, witch doctors, and death, the boys see both sides of their very different worlds. Gilly discovers what the unique Gullah culture is all about and Zach finds love and friendship in his white massa.

For the Gullah slaves, simple faith in God, the only one who can set them free, even though mixed with African superstitions, unfolded as an anchor for these people who are enslaved by man. A truly colorful people emerge in the pages of *Mornin’ Star Risin’*.

This first book sets the stage for emotional involvement in the Ante-bellum slavery issues. Though at times Holmes raises questions in the readers mind concerning the mixture of Christian beliefs and superstitions brought over from Africa, the insensitivity of both slave and owner, and the heartache of child slavery, the stark realities of that culture become clear. At times the Weldon Oak series may prove a bit too scary or confusing for the younger child, yet readers will learn much as they read *Mornin’ Star Risin’*.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 4

*Jubilation Morn’* is the third book in the Weldon Oaks series. It is now 1861 and the country is torn by the great Civil War. Weldon Oaks stands on the brink of disaster. Gilbert Weldon is known for being a kind and fair slave owner, but the disappearance of his favorite slave shakes the stability of his world. To make matters worse, young Gilly, though still a lad, has decided to join a makeshift navy, completely and adamantly against his father’s wishes. As the chaos in their relationship widens, the Weldon’s simple world becomes shaken. But as both Gilbert and Gilly find themselves in the horrors of war, they also find and express what really counts—the deep love between father and son.

When the Yankees draw nearer and nearer to Weldon Oaks, horrors of war enter their once tranquil existence. Guns, cannons, betrayal, and bloodshed shatter their world. With the men off fighting the war, the women are left to fight a war of their own—between themselves and the slaves whom they once trusted. Finally fleeing the violence, Mrs. Weldon and her daughter Laura May head inland to find safety while father and son are caught in the midst of the war.

Though sometimes a bit difficult to read due to the attempt to capture the Gullah’s broken English on paper, *Jubilation Morn’* touches many heart issues and entangles the reader’s emotions in the characters’ lives. The mixture of Christianity and African superstitions and rituals can sometimes be rather disconcerting. Holmes, however, gives a thought provoking look at life through the eyes of both slave and slave owner.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 4

In the fourth book of the Weldon Oaks series, the horrors of the Civil War fill every page with a new twist of the plot. The Weldon family is separated by death, imprisonment, and loss of property. Yet, each hold on to their faith the best they know.
Gilly is found in a wretched Carolinian stockade, a prisoner-of-war where he lies sick and hopeless. His father is dead; his mother and sister gone; his friend Zach somewhere with the troops; their property lost to the enemy, and his body so sick he wishes he were dead. It seems the only way to survive is to become a traitor to his Southern brothers—or somehow escape.

Injustice and hardships face everyone involved in this war, but some find a measure of compassion deep within them and find ways to show God’s love—even to the enemy. To many, death almost sounds sweet, until o’l’ Jim is killed and each one dear to him senses the great loss.

‘Pon Jordan’s Far Shore is, at times, just too realistic to emotionally handle. War is vividly portrayed, from lice to lost limbs. Only the tough-skinned adult may enjoy this one and even then, the stomach should be strong. Boys, especially, would probably enjoy this war story. Still, if the reader can handle it, ‘Pon Jordan’s Far Shore does capture the reality of the life of many Southerners during the Civil War, and for that an Ante-bellum buff would find this book riveting.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 3
Susan Adderley  
Freelance Writer/Former Teacher  
International Ministries, ACS


Jova lived in the midst of magic, fear, and war. As a young man living in the jungle of Africa, belonging to the tribe of the Kru, he witnessed the brutality of the Grebos as they continually attacked his village. It was during an attack that the King’s son, Kaboo, was taken as a “pawn,” to be held for payment. The price was continually be raised and the prince treated horribly. Jova, who was also a prisoner, tried to help the prince when occasion would allow it. After Kaboo’s miraculous escape, Jova followed him through the jungle and watched as he entered into the “white man’s world.” Jova returned to his tribe and kept all he had seen a secret.

Quest for the Lost Prince, written by the husband and wife writing team of Dave and Neta Jackson, follows Jova as he searches for Prince Kaboo to bring him back to rule as the new king of the Kru’s. The old king is dying. The quest takes Jova to the United States. When he arrives, he finds the trail he is seeking, as well as some Grebo assassins. Jova finds Prince Kaboo, now known as Samuel Morris. He also finds the Lord Jesus Christ!

Most of this story is true, as explained in the preface of the book. After the story, there is a section about the life of Samuel Morris. It describes how God used this man’s short life to do a work for him.

This quick moving story will capture the attention of most upper elementary through junior high school students. Younger students will find it interesting to read. Bible teachers could well use this book when studying missionaries or the mission field.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5
Anita Uiley  
Faith Christian School  
Mead, Washington


Juan listens to the mountains breathing around his grandmother’s estate, Punta Verde. Or are the mountains crying? Juan is enjoying his visit to the country. He enjoys escaping the poverty of Bogota and his annoying family. But in a few weeks time, witnessing guerrilla activity and death, Juan learns to love and think clearly. He no longer pridefully places himself above his family members. He now sees they are the ones who can laugh and play despite deprivations. Juan learns his future inheritance of Punta Verde is not his greatest treasure, but rather, he more greatly esteems what he has learned and become. He is ready to go home.

Lyll Becerra de Jenkins’ So Loud a Silence is deftly written to provoke thought and emotion in the YA reader. The characterization is convincing and well developed. One agonizes with Juan over his decisions, and waits for the consequences of his actions. The reader grieves over his friend’s death and the current political situation of the country. The author provides Juan’s thoughts fully so the reader isn’t left to draw inaccurate conclusions. The Colombian hillside setting is vivid with sensory detail. The beauty of the setting contrasts sharply with guerrilla warfare.

Catholicism is described according to the prevailing religion of Columbia. God’s name is taken in vain by characters in the book.

So Loud a Silence is a good addition to YA literature. Self examination is sure to result after reading this novel.
G.D. Lehman beats an untrodden path by viewing the Christian walk through a child outside the Western culture. His locations are exotic (Delhi, Cypress, Egypt) and the conflicts engaging (kidnapping, exploring pyramids for hidden treasure, parasailing to a deserted island, yacht races).

Nonetheless, the series is an average read. The dialogue is wooden, the narrative often reads like a travologue, and Asha is a passenger, not the navigator, to resolving her own predicaments. Also, some parents may object to brief instances of violence.

What redeems the series are the strong Christian message and the enlarging view of the church functioning internationally. Whether children will keep reading and discover these themes, however, is the question.

- Quality - 3  Acceptability - 4

Tammy Perring
Freelance Writer
Snohomish, Washington


In *Forbidden Legacy*, high society Chicago bred Sarah Clarke, along with her Aunt Emily, are traveling an arduous stage coach journey to Dodge City. Sarah grows more fearful of the wild, rugged ways of the West while her aunt unfolds like a flower at the excitement of it all. Sarah’s grandfather has died and left his Texas cattle ranch, the Arrow C, for her to take charge of. They arrive in Dodge City expecting her grandfather’s lawyer to meet them and be their escort on the long wagon trip to the ranch. But a message is waiting for them from the lawyer that he was detained on other business and that a man by the name of Storm (a person of good character) will be their escort.

Warm, gray eyes in a brown and handsome face, quite obviously half breed Indian, introduces himself as Storm. Shocked and fearful, Sarah must decide whether or not she can trust him. After all, it was Indians that had taken her own father’s life a number of years ago. Consulting her aunt they decide to go with Storm.

The wagon trip takes almost a month and during this time Sarah learns many things about herself, the Arrow C Ranch, Storm, and the other ranch hands that have kept it running since her grandfather’s death. Her heart is drawn to Storm with each passing day. He is gentle, sensitive, stubborn, and she is curiously intrigued by his close relationship to God.

One day on the trail Sarah expresses to Storm the attraction and growing love she is feeling for him. Painfully, Storm informs her that her grandfather and his father are one and the same.

*Forbidden Legacy* is a romance novel during the 1800’s of Texas’ history after the Indians had been forced onto reservations and prejudice against them ran high. There are both predictable and unpredictable twists to the story as it unfolds. Though the characters lack full development, Barbara Masci Goss does make trusting God and following his will at all costs a very important part of the story along with the continuing growth of those new to the faith.

*Captured Heart*, also written by Barbara Masci Goss, is not a sequel to *Forbidden Legacy* but another historical romance during the 1800’s. Amanda Barker, the main character, is on a wagon train going to California when her trip is devastated by the death of her entire family to cholera. Angry at God for allowing them to die and leave her alone in spite of all of her prayers she determines to try and make it on her own without God’s help.

The story has a rather predictable, mysterious flavor to it due to the disappearance of another woman from the wagon train and Amanda’s own kidnapping. In the long run Amanda’s early Christian foundation wins her back to God through the faithfulness of a concerned male friend.

- Quality - 4  Acceptability - 5

Debbie Lindsay
Homeschool Parent
Eatonville, Washington


Don’t let the cover picture or the unfamiliar publisher name stop you from reading this book! *Walk Safe Through the Jungle* is an adventure story for the upper elementary reader. It tells the story of J. Paul Stamer’s life and desire to serve God. Paul was orphaned as a young child and grew up in a foster home in rural Germany. At the age of fourteen he immigrated alone to America to live with his married sister.

When the Lord caught his attention, it changed Paul’s life and the lives of those around him. Eventually he attended Asbury College and went to the mission field. Paul, his wife, and their children had many adventures on the mission field living among Muslims in Java, former headhunters in Borneo, and lepers in Sumatra. Eventually they returned to the states and led a German church there.

Katharine Matchette does a good job of taking a biography and making it readable at the fourth grade level without leaving out any excitement. The few black and white drawings inside the book show how dramatically Paul’s life changed through the years. Maps would have been helpful when discussing the various areas where the Stamer’s lived.

- Quality - 3  Acceptability - 5

Barbara Beyer
ACSI Missions Project Coordinator
Colorado Springs, Colorado

---*A Sudden Switch*. (Time Twists; 1.) ISBN 0745936113.
---*Memory’s Gate*. (Time Twists; 3.) ISBN 074593613X.


Elizabeth Forde was having a difficult time with her parents. They seemed so weird and embarrassing to her. After she spouted off to her boyfriend, Jeff Dubbs, and told him to meet her to run away, she went home to take a bath. While she was dozing off in the bathtub, something happened and she found herself in another parallel place and time. Her struggles and adventure continue there, where people are sure she is Sarah and wonder at the change in her. In *A Sudden Switch*, Paul McCusker has done such a skillful job entangling the reader into Elizabeth/Sarah’s experience that one’s mind plays with the idea that this could actually happen. Jeff, with the help of his guardian, Uncle Malcolm, figures enough how the switch happened just in time to save both girls.

*Stranger in the Mist* is the story of King Arthur coming to America, and being transported back to a church in England in time to save it for the Kingdom of God. Once again, the entire plot line seems very implausible at a cursory glance, but the reader is hooked and reads on to find out why and how this happened. Uncle Malcolm and Jeff travel to England and uncover the difficulties of a small parish and learn about English history and much of the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

*Memory’s Gate* deals with the depression of older people in a nursing home and their desire to escape from the situation that they are in and return to a better time in their lives. Some
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- "Pick of the Lists"

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- Christian Library Journal

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ruthless men have heard about the parallel time that has been experienced in the town of Fault Line, and fraudulently attract many of these people to the idea of escaping from their present life. Elizabeth Forde works out the pain of her former experience while working at the home, and ends up saving their cherished belongings and being rescued herself just in time.

These three books are the first in a science fiction series. The same characters and basic setting are used in each, but each succeeding book presents summaries of past experiences, so one could read them in any order.

After the last chapter of each book, included in it, is the first chapter of the next book. Uncle Malcolm is a wise, wealthy man with a deep foundation of relationship to God. He provides stability and inspiration in the lives of the main characters. The characters grow and develop as people and in their trust in God through their difficult experiences; and so this series seems valuable and valid for young people to follow. Paul McCusker’s style is fast paced and intriguing and leaves the reader wanting to be involved in the next adventure.


Jip, a young orphan boy living on a poor farm, has no idea where he came from nor who his family might be. His earliest recollection (or perhaps he’s just been told so often that he thinks he remembers) is falling off a wagon as a three-year-old. It was said to be a gypsy wagon, hence the name, Jip. He is content to care for the animals and carry out his extensive chores, even happy to befriend Put (Putnam), the farm’s “lunatic.” The cast of characters is a colorful and varied one, from the Lymans, caretakers of the poor farm, to Teacher and her Quaker sweetheart, Luke Stevens, and little Toddy and Lucy, fellow residents.

Jip’s life is disrupted by the appearance of an oily stranger, one with provocative allusions to Jip’s past and to someone who has a great interest in him. Could Jip’s family actually be attempting to find him after all these years, or is this strange intruder to be feared and avoided at all costs?

Jip’s character is an endearing one, embodying many of the very best qualities in mankind. He is a compassionate soul, often putting others before his own desires. He is a hard worker, able to accomplish a large amount of work and motivate the others “under” him. And although he is lacking in education, Teacher sparks his self-confidence by her encouragement and belief in him.

This is historical fiction for young people at its best. Katherine Paterson transports us to pre-Civil War Vermont in a story that leaves the reader clamoring for more.
orphanage, when Ma dies. From there, the children arrive safely back home and settles in. Ethan makes his choice to go to Kansas. Although he doesn’t know what is ahead for him, he knows that God will be with him as he has always been in the past.

Across the Border is based on the real life story of Ethan Cooper. The author, Arleta Richardson, tells about the real Ethan in the Introduction and the Epilogue. This real life Ethan died at age 96, before the book was finished. He was able to see two of the previous books from this same series and was amazed that anyone would want to write about his life. The story is entertaining and has strong Christian values throughout. When a choice is needed, another character reminds them of what God would have them do.


The Sin Eater is an intriguing title for an intriguing story. It is the story of Cole, a boy who returns to his grandparents’ home with his father after the death of his mother. Yet it goes beyond this and is the story of Cole’s ancestors, as well. The setting is New Hampshire in an area so remote that no address other than the town’s name is necessary on your mail and where everything is just as Cole remembered it from past visits, with one exception—his Ma is dead! While Cole’s character becomes integrated into his new surroundings, his father becomes more and more withdrawn until a dramatic conclusion occurs, his suicide!

Woven throughout this tale is the Sin Eater. Who was he?; how did he die?; did he really exist?; what does it mean to be a sin eater? These questions may not be satisfactorily answered for the readers. Is the Sin Eater just a man who assists others in assuaging their guilt and “who teaches your house to love,” or does the author, Gary D. Schmidt, want you, the reader, to take a

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more metaphysical view and believe the Sin Eater somehow actually consumes the sin of others? An adult’s conclusion may not be the same as that of younger readers.

This book is very well-written with descriptions that transport you to the time or situation described. Although a serious book, it is not written in a depressing manner but rather matter-of-fact. The pain of its characters is obvious and although this pain cannot be totally erased, the ending is satisfactory to the reader. Several times profanity is used.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Ceil Carey
Middle School Librarian
Plano, Illinois


In James Shott’s novel, Abigail, the telling of a good tale is balanced by a respect for historical fact; characters’ strengths are realistically balanced with their very human failings; complex affairs of state are interwoven with revealing scenes from the characters’ personal lives.

Although this is the seventh in the author’s series about biblical characters, it easily stands alone. Abigail, for whom the book is named, is David’s third wife. When they first meet, David is an outlaw, fleeing King Saul’s jealous rage. Abigail’s stubborn husband has foolishly refused to provision David’s men, and David has sworn revenge. In order to appease David, and protect her home, Abigail defies her husband, traveling into the wilderness to find David and present him with supplies.

Events quickly overtake her; hearing that her husband has passed away, David arrives to her own surprise, Abigail finds herself wedded to this engaging volume. Although tastefully handled, there are some references to David’s skill as a lover.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

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


Author James Shott has woven a creative, descriptive storyline to help fill in the blanks in the life of this well-known Bible figure, Bathsheba. Throughout the book, readers are given the insiders’ view into Bathsheba—as the woman, the wife of King David, and the mother of Solomon. From the first time Bathsheba encounters David in his palace at the mourning of Abigail, we get a glimpse into history. No longer is it a mystery why certain events took place or what the customs of the day deemed should occur. Shott ably weaves these important facts into the storyline in a seemingly effortless fashion.

As Bathsheba takes her place as the newest wife of King David, she begins her own journey of spiritual growth. Throughout the trials and punishment brought on by her sin with David, Bathsheba matures and learns to see life through different eyes. She takes on the faithfulness and courage exhibited to her by Nathan the prophet. When she gives birth to Solomon, her heart is full of fear at Nathan’s promise that her son will be heir to the throne, an often bloody, dangerous venture. Bathsheba again learns more of David’s God and how faithful this God will be in times of trouble.

Bathsheba is a book full of sights, sounds, feelings; readers will find themselves truly understanding the attitudes and actions of those sometimes misunderstood Bible figures. Biblical verses that often left one wondering why, are now pieced together/filled in and become self-explanatory.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


“Darla Jean, my name is Bradley Atwood. I am your father.” Stunned, DJ is positive that this person on the phone must be playing a cruel joke. After fourteen years of no contact, why now? This is definitely bad timing, especially since she is just getting used to the idea of her mother marrying Robert in a few months. She is going to have a dad and instant twin brothers to pester her, though she has to admit that she enjoys the Double Bs, as she calls them.

Contact with her biological father continues over the following weeks until she finds herself on her way to spend several days with him and his wife at their Arabian horse farm. Because Mr. Atwood is an attorney, DJ’s mother is afraid of possible legal problems regarding the custody of her daughter. DJ herself has many questions regarding this person who has intruded on her life. Gran and Grandpa Joe remind her of Romans 8:28 that says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Out of the Blue is number four in the High Hurdles series by Lauraine Snelling. The book begins where the previous book ended, though it can be read by itself because each book touches on the history of the characters and concludes without leaving the reader dangling. Once a reader begins this series it is easy to get caught up in the life of DJ, her family, and friends and to want to follow it through to the end.

Aside from being an entertaining story, the characters strive to seek God’s direction through their problems which include the emotional upheavals of adolescence. This book will be attractive to young lady horse enthusiasts.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Debbie Lindsay
Homeschool Parent
Eatonville, Washington

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Hurdles series by Lauraine Snelling. The book begins where the previous book ended, though it can be read by itself because each book touches on the history of the characters and concludes without leaving the reader dangling. Once a reader begins this series it is easy to get caught up in the life of DJ, her family, and friends and to want to follow it through to the end.

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◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Debbie Lindsay
Homeschool Parent
Eatonville, Washington
The story does have the semblance of being told as the main character relays her experiences. Some dialogue occurs with little setting, and documents are quoted. The younger reader may skim these portions for plot. The curious will gain much from taking the time to understand. Thoughts are bound to be provoked when Aissa catches that freedom spoken of will apply to them. Aissa watches men vote for abolition but grieves when England refuses to grant it. She finally does gain her own freedom after her sister sues their owner under the pretense that owning slaves is unconstitutional.

Author Mildred Pitts Walter has written convincing historical fiction in Second Daughter. Motivated by the factual account of Mum Bett suing her owner in 1781, Walter creates a story which fills in the details for the YA reader. It is enlightening to see how African Americans responded to the American Revolution. While some joined the British army hoping for freedom, others had faith in the colonials and their aspirations.

The story does have the semblance of being told as the main character relays her experiences. Some dialogue occurs with little setting, and documents are quoted. The younger reader may skim these portions for plot. The curious will gain much from taking the time to understand. Thoughts are bound to be provoked when Aissa says, "Until we know ourselves, we will never be free!"

Delrita had decided a long time before that she was going to be invisible. Considering that she was in a new town and a new junior high school, it didn’t seem too difficult to stay unknown. But Delrita’s reasons for hiding were less than good. "Punky," Delrita’s thirty-five-year-old uncle, has Down Syndrome. His child-like behavior both endear him to Delrita, whom he fondly calls D.J., and sometimes embarrasses her. D.J. often wonders how she can love Punky so much, yet feel shame at the same time. And that’s the reason D.J. chooses to be an "invisible" person. She figures that if she doesn’t get close to anyone she doesn’t have to risk the embarrassment of Punky’s sometimes abnormal behavior and the subsequent loss of a friendship.

D.J. works hard at building a shell around herself. Yet, despite these efforts to stay aloof, a friendship happens, and it soon becomes one of D.J.’s most precious treasures. When some difficult circumstances arise and a misunderstanding between D.J. and her friend, Avarnelle, D.J. is so devastated that she determines to become a hermit for the rest of her life.

But watching Punky and his innocent trust and liking for so many people changes D.J. She finally realizes that Punky “had been carving a beautiful niche (of life) for himself with his heart.” Now she knows that she can risk facing the world and find freedom in just being who she is—free to be Delrita—a maturing young lady full of life and possibilities.

June Rae Wood writes a touching first novel about a young teenage girl trying to discover herself. The Man Who Loved Clowns offers a real and inspiring picture of a loving family who also happens to have a special needs person living with them. Based on her own family’s experience with a Down Syndrome brother, Wood is able to give depth and accuracy to the feelings and dilemmas faced, yet is clear in her message that the blessings and love received far surpass the hard times.

This is an excellent book to read to junior high students to help them understand special needs people and also gain understanding of the trauma and hurts felt when facing the death of a loved one.


"Freedom is living with realities in a way that they don’t overcome you." Here is the lesson learned by Aissa, an African slave, during the American Revolution. As the Declaration of Independence is written, and the Massachusetts Bill of Rights formed, slaves wonder if the freedom spoken of will apply to them. Aissa watches men vote for abolition but grieves when England refuses to grant it. She finally does gain her own freedom after her sister sues their owner under the pretense that owning slaves is unconstitutional.

June Rae Wood writes a touching first novel about a young teenage girl trying to discover herself. The Man Who Loved Clowns offers a real and inspiring picture of a loving family who also happens to have a special needs person living with them. Based on her own family’s experience with a Down Syndrome brother, Wood is able to give depth and accuracy to the feelings and dilemmas faced, yet is clear in her message that the blessings and love received far surpass the hard times.

This is an excellent book to read to junior high students to help them understand special needs people and also gain understanding of the trauma and hurts felt when facing the death of a loved one.


What happens when a halfling has the temerity to travel to the Land of the Golden Mountain to learn to build a path for the firewagon and other secrets of technology to advance the Great Work in his native land? Laurence Yep, in Dragon’s Gate, educates the reader. The book is set in Three Willows Village, Toishan County, Kwangtung Province, China in 1865, and continues in the Sierra Nevadas, America. Otter is a curious teen-ager, fascinated by the accounts of the Land of the Golden Mountain reported by the infrequent visits of his adopted father, Squeaky, and the family patriarch, Uncle Foxfire. Otter has the occasion to make the voyage himself, and finds that the legendary America is not all he has heard, that there is equality amongst equals, that the rules of survival are primitive: Keep warm. Keep dry. Keep clean.

He unwittingly joins a crew of misfits headed by Uncle Foxfire and Squeaky; they are the point men in building a train tunnel through the Sierra Nevadas.

The background for this fiction based on history was well-researched. The events are documented, the sources listed following the story. The story itself in the early chapters seems to meander, much like the life of Otter, the main character and narrator. But once he has arrived in America, there are unbelievably true events unfolding on nearly every page.

Su Hagerty
Freelance Writer
Issaquah, Washington

Question: What has USA Today titled the Second Sexual Revolution? Answer: Abstinence. Now Focus on the Family has published a book with abstainers in mind, or those considering it, or those who might consider it. It features frightening facts from the first sexual revolution. Sex, Lies & the Truth is laid out in an easy to understand format. It’s easy reading even though its 181 pages may intimidate some young people. Quotes from teens are interspersed throughout in eye-pleasing text boxes and nail the target every time. For example, Holly says, “Birth control pills and condoms and all of that gives you the excuse to try and to protect yourself. But it’s not true, because you still get hurt.”

The chapter on STD’s, sexually transmitted diseases, is referenced with experts and startling statistics like 5,000 people get HIV every day, gonorrhea is America’s most frequently reported communicable disease, and HIV kills thousands of women each year—far more than AIDS.

A recent poll of 5,000 women by Redbook Magazine agree married sex is better sex. That’s the truth. The lies? Use condoms—it’s safe. The facts? Condoms are not preventing pregnancies or STD’s. The book is written for both Christian and non-Christian readers with a simple gospel message presenting the ultimate choice that will bring ultimate freedom and strength—Jesus Christ.

Sex, Lies & the Truth is written in an inoffensive manner, offering not guilt but choices to young people, along with some practical tips such as a he says/she says scenario: what to say when the date applies pressure. More helpful resources are found in the appendices that list adoption agencies and abstinence programs throughout the country.

Every teen should read Sex, Lies & the Truth. They’ve heard enough lies through media, schools, and peers. It’s time they heard the truth.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Ginger McGrath
Freelance Writer
McMinnville, Oregon


In Process, a devotional, is thorough, well-written, and spiritually uplifting. Even the introduction has meaningful analogies to life’s difficulties! It includes specific, practical scriptural advice. Boyce draws the reader in with three to four pages of testimonies or examples on a particular theme, a scriptural principle to ponder, and concludes with a “zoom-in” of several practical steps on how to achieve victory. The In Process topics range from missions, discipleship, and witnessing, to depression, sexuality, and date rape. Fascinating stories and relevant issues are designed to challenge believers on to growth in their daily walks. Although the devotional is not designed for evangelism, non-believers may come to know Christ through it. With thirty-five separate devotions in 158 pages, this devotional is a good value. It would be excellent for a small group study for high school or college youth, as well as for individual devotions.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Mary Jo Krzyminski, M. Ed.
Christian School Language Arts Teacher
Norfolk, Nebraska


“Did you ever wish you could feel better about yourself? Feel your world is falling apart? Think your self-image has gotten so muddy that you all about understanding the parent-teen relationship, there are many other chapter topics including: How do you Pick a Hero? How do you know if you’re a real Christian? Why be honest? What is Love? What is true humility? The author uses fictional examples of a typical teen family problem, gives a suggested scripture reading, and explains the biblical principle.

Johnson has a teen-oriented jargon that is sometimes difficult to read. Teenagers may fully understand it, but it takes some wading through. The examples are fictional, and some are a little far fetched. However, not to “throw the baby out with the bath water,” this book has some solid biblical advice, and may assist teens struggling in today’s society.

Does Anybody Know What Planet My Parents Are From? is designed to be an individual devotional, and seems more geared for boys than girls.

◆ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Mary Jo Krzyminski, M. Ed.
Christian School Language Arts Teacher
Norfolk, Nebraska
don’t even know what you look like? If so, this book is for you.” Stand Tall, a book on self-esteem, gives solid biblical advice to teens who are struggling with low self-esteem. Facing today’s teen situations with candor and gentleness, Sanders addresses some tough issues. He gives personal examples from teens across the country who have had to face family crises, immoral sexual relationships, alcoholic parents, and some typical self-esteem issues. He offers hope to those students who need it the most.

Sanders defines healthy self-esteem as knowing how God views the teen versus what the world would like them to believe. Teens struggle with feelings of inferiority. Sanders addresses the teen’s thought life, communication in the home, the importance of taking care of their bodies, and getting in touch with God.

Stand Out gives encouragement to those desiring to become strong leaders. Sanders simply examines the qualities of leaders, and offers insight into how to become one. Making right choices, setting goals, the value of integrity, and honoring others are some of the topics on which he elaborates. Adults already in leadership positions can be benefited by the tips and biblical principles he gives.

Sanders’ style is not pushy, and his advice is filled with solid scriptural support. The author has a personal informal way of writing that will cause readers to relax and relate to the meaning. Chapter questions, mini-quizzes, and personal testimonies from teens are neatly intertwined throughout the books—further enhancing practical interaction with the content. The writing style would also be ideal for a small group study and could definitely promote parent-teen communication. Brightly colored and appealing to teens, the appearance of the books in this series matches the quality of the content.


Susie Shellenger humorously, yet sensitively, addresses the issues of most concern to teenage girls. Covering the spectrum ranging from zits to spirituality to sexuality, she addresses the teens in their own language. Written with candor and godly wisdom, I believe she gives sound advice. The book is written in a question and answer format. The questions come from actual teens with real needs. Short sub-sections with comical illustrations and mini-quizzes as chapter dividers make the book very easy to read.

This book was put to the ultimate test. It was left out on an end table to see if my thirteen-year-old would pick it up and peruse it. Not only did she read it, but she enjoyed it! Shellenger, also the editor of Focus on the Family’s Brio magazine, has written Guys and a Whole Lot More as a thoughtful, helpful, and culturally relevant book for teens. It is of particular value to Christians, as scriptural advice and church related issues are woven throughout.


The modern world is inundated with religious viewpoints. Because of the seemingly endless variety of those viewpoints, the lines between truth and error are continually being redrawn to accommodate any and all systems of belief. This often leaves the concerned Christian without a guide, not knowing where to turn to find answers for the objections to his or her faith put forth by non-Christians. That person, or anyone who wants to understand the distinctive of Christianity and how it compares to other religions, will find Dean Halverson’s book to be a very useful tool.

Among the strengths of Halverson’s book is the combination of clear, concise language and the well designed charts and lists which make it not only easy to read, but more important, easy to use. Often pressed for time, the modern Christian will find its convenience very attractive. Most important though, is that this utility did not come at the expense of depth and scope. While the charts provide a ready reference for those in need of immediate help, the text itself and extensive bibliography at the end of each section also provide the student of comparative religions a wealth of information and resources for further study. Add to these a chapter on the uniqueness of Jesus as the only way to God and another defending the Bible as the word of God, and the end result is a book which should find its way onto the shelves of every Christian library.

Mary Jo Kryminski, M. Ed.
Christian School Language Arts Teacher
Norfolk, Nebraska


“A diamond is a chunk of coal that is made under pressure.” Dad

Dear Nicole,

You’ve had a hard day dealing with the pressures of school; then you come home to be bombarded by chores to do, Teachers, friends, family, and even the TVplace expectations and demands upon you. You place demands upon yourself. As an adult you will have to live up to expectations. How do you cope? Try to realize which expectations are valid and which ones are not. Consider Jesus and his example of how he handled the pressures and demands during his sojourn on earth. He understands your pressures and will help you through them.

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” Mt. 11:28.

I’m praying for you.

Love, Dad

This is a condensed sample of the style in which Letters to Nicole is written. Tim Smith, a father and youth pastor, has written this book with the helpful suggestions of his teenage daughter as a tool for Christian parents to use for their young teens to read and to strike up meaningful conversations. The thirty topics include peer pressure, sexual issues, music, death, fear, language, etc. The author uses stories, examples and a conversational style that makes this an appealing book.

Each chapter begins with a quote and usually ends with a pertinent scripture. There is space left at the end of each chapter for the teen to write out his/her own questions or to express their
feelings. At the back of the book are discussion starters, ten tips for guided conversations, a topical and scriptural index.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Debbie Lindsay
Homeschool P Parent
Eatonville, Washington


Hardbound, $18.95. Gr. 6 - Adult.

Readers often equate the term “civil rights” with racial tension and inequality of treatment between black and white citizens. In Civil Rights author Eileen Lucas traces back to the beginning of our country and fills in the gaps many are not aware of. Not only does she discuss the failings of our country’s laws, she deals with the many historical and key pivotal legal decisions which have helped us become a nation which aspires to equality for all its people.

Ms. Lucas speaks of the fundamental rights of all people, freedoms ensured us by our Constitution, different movements, and a peek at the future among other sub-topics. One very helpful addition to this book is the Chronology, detailing each important event in the history of civil rights, from 1774 to 1995. This book increases awareness and moves the reader to more understanding of those who are “different” from us. Interestingly, Lucas discusses discrimination against Irish and Chinese immigrants as well as other lesser known victims. She does mention in passing the rights for gays, lesbians, etc. as those who have become active in asserting their right to live as they choose.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


Believing that a book is a gift that keeps on giving, Louis Caldwell wrote his own for lack of one written to high school graduates in the book store! He fills it with examples from his teaching career and life experiences that illustrate his advice to high school graduates.

Walking graduates through the moment they realize they are finished with high school and are on a new road, replete with pitfalls and challenges, he outlines the steps to help them on the journey.

Writing from a Christian perspective, Caldwell centers his advice around pleasing and obeying God in a graduate’s future, using Biblical examples. He also includes tips for decision making, compares talent with the desire to achieve, and points to Christ for future direction in their lives. He varies his writing pattern and inserts a chapter in the question and answer format.

This revised and enlarged edition includes a chapter on the temptations of drugs in today’s culture and Caldwell encourages graduates to realize their choice of “no.” He says, instead, to say yes to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Carolyn Hearing
Retired Teacher
Virginia, Minnesota


Enter into the world of the future, Genetic Engineering by Clarice Swisher. This author takes on the daunting task of defining and simplifying the technical aspects of genetic engineering. She does so by breaking down the various subject areas found under this general term. In her first chapter, Swisher discusses the implications of genetic engineering and its relationship to plants. She answers questions such as how to make healthier, more robust plants, how to change the flavor, color, size, nutritional content etc. Swisher then ties in animals and the role they play in genetic engineering.

Other topics are also discussed. These include genetic engineering and medicine, use of animals for the future production of human medicine, uses in industry, and genetic engineering and the future. Each topic listed above is given a chapter’s worth of facts, current practices, procedures and guidelines.

We are also introduced to the pros and cons of this type of technology, the groups which advocate research, and those who are opposed for moral reasons. This author cites both sides of these touchy issues with simple facts; she leaves the final moral analysis for the reader to determine.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan
Overall, this series is a laudable effort and compares favorably with other career exploration series. The device of having real professionals talk about their own careers makes each title lively reading.

◆ Quality - 5  ♦ Acceptability - 5

David W. Rash
Public Services Librarian
Everett Community College
Everett, Washington


Working in Health Care and Wellness is one of a series of up-to-date, informative, and engaging career exploration titles. The author, Barbara Lee, follows the same formula for each title in this Exploring Careers series. Twelve biographical sketches are presented: each biographee tells his or her own story as well as introducing us to his or her profession. In about four or five pages of text, alternating between first person narrative and description, each biographee recounts their typical routine on the job, then describes their own career path, and concludes by speculating on the future (sometimes gloomy) of their profession and by giving advice on how to get started in the field.

The author profiles both standard as well as unorthodox careers in each title of the series. Related professions are briefly described in sidebars and boxes. Technical terms are defined in margin notes. The biographees are an ethnically diverse and gender neutral bunch—for example, the nurse is male. A possible weakness is that all of them work in the Baltimore, Maryland area, the author's hometown, and this may not be representative of the entire nation. Each biographee recounts his or her failures and dead-ends: for most of these folks getting there was neither quick nor easy.

The layout of each book in the series is attractive, typeface is large, and illustrations are profuse—seventy-two color photos in Working in Health Care and Wellness. The text and illustrations are current. For example, the implications of such innovations as non-chemical based photography and the impact of the Internet are mentioned in Working with Animals. The indexing is adequate. Each title concludes with a list of the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the professional organizations and associations for each career field. Unfortunately, no average salary is indicated for any of the careers.

Let's face it—teens are having sex. This generation has received the message that sex is OK as long as it's safe sex. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is a straight-to-the-point, easy-to-read paperback that addresses the difficult aspects of premarital sex and the diseases that can be the result—namely the AIDS virus. Gage does not skirt the issue. Testimonies of lives destroyed by wrong choices point powerfully to the devastation of extramarital sex. Beginning with the testimony of Magic Johnson, Gage also gives the scientific facts about AIDS. He explains the different opportunistic infections, malignancies, and diseases that attack the body when the immune system is down with AIDS. He also explains how AIDS is and is not contracted.

This book could be used for information for a research paper, help for a promiscuous teen, help for someone caught in a homosexual lifestyle, for evangelical purposes in a specific situation, or for sex education purposes.

◆ Quality - 5  ♦ Acceptability - 5

Mary Jo Kryzynski, M. Ed.
Christian School Language Arts Teacher
Norfolk, Nebraska


Hardbound, $19.95. Gr. 6 - Adult.

Take a journey back down memory lane with author Gillian Souter in her colorfully photographed book, Storybook Favorites in Cross-Stitch. This book opens with a detailed information section on the process and technique of cross-stitching. Souter’s diagrams make the directions simple to understand because of their size and clarity. She offers many helpful hints to the novice as well as the seasoned stitcher.

The author also provides a pattern of alphabet and numbers for easy use in designing and personalizing Cross-Stitch treasures. The color photos bring these delightful characters to life and added new life to old friends.

◆ Quality - 5  ♦ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan

Street art, frescoes, murals, graffiti: all of them are found on walls, in cities and towns around the world and have been since prehistoric times. Michael Capek explains the individual kinds of art and gives example where they may be found and information about the artists who painted them. While the title of the book begins with the earliest examples that we have of murals, the cave paintings in Lascaux, France, and Altamira, Spain, and then continues on to street art in the United States, the arrangement of the book is just the opposite. After an introduction to murals and the technique used to paint them on walls and the media used most recent examples are talked about first progressing back to the earliest examples. While this may strike some readers as contradictory and confusing, this makes a great deal of sense.

Readers of the book will have seen street art: graffiti on public buildings and the subway, and may also have seen examples of murals on walls of prominent buildings within their own communities, many vacant store windows are decorated with a kind of mural until new renter/businesses are found, student and daily newspapers as well as magazines and television have used articles about street art. The reverse chronological arrangement works by taking the readers from the known to the unknown world of historical murals, Renaissance masterpieces, church art of the Eastern and Western churches and finally to the prehistoric cave pictures. Each chapter stands on its own to tie in with a history class as well as art class.

The reader, and teacher as well, will gain a new understanding of street art within his/her own community. Many older churches in both urban and rural settings used wall murals to relate Bible lessons, a tradition brought from the European churches. Many communities now commission artists to decorate blank walls within the community to beautify the neighborhood, as did the people in the California communities mentioned in the book. Some art is not...
commissioned and then is considered graffiti. This text will help people "see" more art in their surroundings and so will be a good addition to school libraries.

However, several times within the text murals are mentioned but the illustration on the page is of another mural, one not discussed. There are places where the narrative text breaks off and the reader turns not to the paragraph conclusion but to a two page insert about an artist. Most of the words in the glossary are defined within the text, which saves using the glossary, but not always. The glossary defines the words which the younger reader might not necessarily know. The index is usable with the pages on which the reproductions appear in boldface type. Color illustrations though small seem to come alive. These minor things aside, this would be a good addition to a school library because of its large audience and ability to be used in a variety of ways.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

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


Imagine yourself the leader being assigned the task of presenting a children's stage play. With Nan Rump's Puppets and Masks, no adult need fear such an assignment again! From the first pages, the author brings a feeling of confident instruction to the reader. Rump explains the why's and how's of getting started. She describes the necessary materials and where to find them. She also provides many useful and helpful hints on making the experience both easy and pain free.

The second section provides numerous puppets and masks to create with inexpensive, around the house materials. Eager participants can make: vibrant butterflies, buzzing bees, contemplative house materials. Eager participants can make: grocery bag masks, paper plate mask, wind masks, and paper-mache masks. Rump provides beautifully clear illustrations of each creation and step by step instructions. She breaks each project down into two sections:

(1) Paving the way—preparation materials, construction preparation.

(2) Children's Activity—materials, preparing the work area, completing the project, animating the puppet and variations.

In her third section, the author shares the in's and out's of stage setting. Readers can create a flamboyant sun, drifting moon, singing stars, flowing river, wandering mountain, and shimmering tree. She also shares how to add sound effects and make appropriate sized stages. Section four deals with opening night and the story itself. Several scripts are provided and Rump even details how novice stage directors (or kids) can write their own stage play based on her formula. Puppets and Masks is a fun, innovative book sure to be of great value for all budding theatrical enthusiasts.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


Christmas creeps in at summer's end as evening shadows hover and lengthen, and autumn's constellations slip quietly into place. It builds to a crescendo with the Advent and the Incarnation of Christ. In December, it is a brilliant celebration that consumes the globe for a brief period of time, then gradually fades out through the New Year into late winter and spring.

Madeleine L'Engle and Luci Shaw carry the reader in this collection of Christmas readings literally through this special season from late summer to early spring, from the Annunciation to Epiphany. Reading Winter Song is like experiencing Christmas with all of your senses poised, waiting. You can feel the brush of autumn as it blows into winter. You can taste the chestnuts, you can smell the pine needles, and you can feel the damp closeness of the stable. Softness caresses you with winter's snow and a lingering promise of longed-for warmth.

This unique book of poetry and Christmas readings is like a process with a beginning and an end that is best experienced in its rightful sequence. Pieces of it were light and easy, others were deep and thought provoking, but together the book has a thread of continuity that begins softly, builds with the season, and fades quietly.

Winter Song is a beautiful, touching, moving collaboration of work by these two gifted authors. The different selections provide a variety so that where one reading may not touch you particularly, the next might. This is due not only to the different types of writing (short poems, longer poems, prose, short stories, etc.), but also to the different styles of writing of the two authors.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

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


Terry Lindvall's Surprised by Laughter is a treasure, capable of engaging veteran readers as well as exciting newcomers to Lewis. On the cover, poised somewhat stiffly and clothed in what looks like a bathrobe over a business suit, stands one of the most influential Christians of the twentieth century, looking out from a black and white photograph with a wry half-smile on his face. And once the book is opened, it does not disappoint.

Lindvall introduces Lewis's comic world by tracing its roots to the wit of G. K. Chesterton, another of this century's great Christian writers. For Lindvall this connection is not incidental, and so he frequently brings the reader back to Chesterton throughout Surprised by Laughter. The bulk of the work treats comedy according to the categories Lewis identifies in The Screwtape Letters (Joy, Fun, The Joke Proper, and Satire and Flippance). Each of these categories receives from 3-9 chapters, and a conclusion on "The Laughter of Love" wraps up the volume. Despite the seemingly rigid organization, the text meanders enjoyably from one quote to another, amidst personal anecdotes, jokes, and assorted incidents relating to Lewis and his writing.

This is one of the more curious books ever written on Lewis. Though organized as an academic treatment of one dimension of Lewis's life and thought, Surprised by Laughter has the feel of a good biography, one through which the reader not only becomes familiar with the events in a famous person's life, but actually becomes acquainted with that person. There is delightfully more of Lewis than of Lindvall in these pages, and for that reason the book is successful. Happily, Lindvall also avoids the shallow perspective to which a work such as this might have succumbed. Lewis's "comic" world as portrayed in Surprised by Laughter is certainly full of genuine fun, but it is not trite. It is comic in the sense that Dante's masterpiece (with a vision encompassing Heaven, Hell, and
everything in between) is appropriately titled *The Divine Comedy*.

The book has only a couple of minor flaws. First, though what Lindvall has done in connecting Lewis with Chesterton is valuable, sometimes the presence of Chesterton becomes intrusive and leaves one wondering if Chesterton’s name ought to have been in the subtitle as well. The only other weakness might be Lindvall’s own prose, which is at times be so laced with metaphors that the style obscures the meaning of a passage. Thankfully, this has only a minimal effect on *Surprised by Laughter*, because Lindvall does such a good job of ‘staying out of the way’ as an author.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Jon Balsbaugh
U. of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota


Diana Waring, in *What in the World’s Going on Here*, presents four hours of condensed history starting with Creation and ending with the French Revolution. If you have ever asked yourself what was happening elsewhere during a Biblical event, what the real chronology of the Bible is, or how to evaluate world events from a Christian point of view, this set of tapes will answer your questions. Find out where the book of Esther comes in, who was behind the Spanish Inquisition, why Martin Luther wanted to change the church, and how England broke with the Catholic Church and why.

Volume 2 starts with Napoleon and ending with the rebirth of Israel. Find out how Moody uses his extraordinary faith to pray in food for orphans or follow Florence Nightingale as she tends four miles of patients during the Crimean War. What were the real causes of World War I or World War II? Follow important leaders through the Great Depression and see God’s miracles at Dunkirk and El Alamein. Rejoice with the Jews as they return to their homeland. Take this fascinating journey and see world history centered around Christianity.

Listening to this set of tapes provides the listener a usable time line which interrelates the Bible, important historical figures and events. Diana Waring uses interesting biographical details and has the ability to draw word pictures which keep the listener fairly well focused. The tapes include so many details that they are most effective when listened to in small increments, while taking lots of notes, so follow up discussion can aid learning. Overall, this set of well researched tapes will be a valuable asset for any adult or can be used to supplement a history curriculum for high school.

◆ Quality - 3/4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

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


Do the names Marian Anderson, Ralph Bunch, Cesar Chavez, Joe DiMaggio, or Helen Keller all have in common? Each has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Author Carmen Bredeson has written this fascinating book entitled *Presidential Medal of Freedom Winners*, a collective biography. This book tells of the early life, education, professional accomplishments, and personal quotes of ten persons awarded this presidential award.

Others who are included in this collective biography are Margaret Chase Smith, Margaret Mead, Hector Garcia, Neil Armstrong, and Colin Powell. Each short biography is a mini-study in itself. With a well-known person like Colin Powell, the reader can come away with a deeper appreciation for all he accomplished for our nation. Others, not as easily recognizable, become new-found heroes to those not familiar with their courage and achievements. This is a fine way to become introduced to these heroic figures of yesterday and today.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


The name Billy Graham is probably familiar to more people in the United States than any other religious leader ever known. In *Crusader for Christ* we find out very little about him as a man. Wilson takes us on a tour through the many crusades and other ministries associated with Billy Graham and gives us a view into the inner workings of an organization of this type. She over explains sometimes simple things in order to provide details.

From *Slave Boy to Bishop* takes us to West Africa in 1809 where a Nigerian baby is born who will one day be the first African appointed as the Bishop of West Africa. Samuel Adjai Crowther begins life in a wealthy family, but is soon sold into slavery. Ultimately rescued from this life, he is cared for at a mission school. Amidst the backdrop of warring tribes and villages Samuel works undauntedly for the people of his homeland, traveling and negotiating for improvements to their lives. A humorous story about his first meeting with Queen Victoria of England gives us an insight into the humble man Bishop Crowther was.

*Prophet of the Pacific* is a telling of missionary efforts in the New Hebrides, specifically the work of John Paton of Scotland. Against cannibalism, murders, frequent attempts on their own lives, and bouts with nature, disease and illness they press on. A story of courage and commitment to a task, even when it appears hopeless. Many examples of how God uses even the simplest incidences to turn the hearts of the people.

*Saint in the Slums* begins with a rich, promising life for Toyohiko Kagawa of Japan. But in a few short years his parents have died and he is
shipped off to live with a grandmother who doesn’t like him. Going away to school he is greatly influenced by his English teacher Mr. Myers, a missionary. Toyohiko intentionally chooses to live in the slums amidst the people he wants to minister to. He dispenses food and other necessities in the slums of Kobe. Saint in the slums becomes a testament to the influence one Christian man can have on an entire nation that does not know Christ.

South Seas Sailor is more the story of the beginning of missionary efforts in the New Hebrides. John Williams was apprenticed to an ironmonger as a youth, and because of this experience God used his ability to create a ship to sail from island to island, making first contact for missionary work. Williams becomes a martyr for Christ, but his efforts became the inspiration for beginning of missionary efforts in the New Hebrides.

In The Heroine of Newgate, Betsy Gurney was the third child in a Quaker family of eleven children. Weak and quiet as a young girl, Betsy became internationally known for her tireless dedication and outspoken demand for prison reform in English prisons where debtors, women, and children were housed with hardened criminals. Elizabeth Fry (her married name) successfully initiated many concepts and ideas that affected prisoners’ rights and treatment, not only in Britain, but around the world.

In Wizard of the Great Lake, Alexander MacKay was a Scottish engineer commissioned by his mission society to build a road into the Ugandan interior. Dealing with great setbacks and extremely uneven treatment from the tribal king, Alexander MacKay never really sees the fruit of his years in Africa. The title of the book refers to his ability to create things that astounded the tribal people around the great Lake Victoria.

Each of the books in the above series are written by different authors, so there is a variation in style to some extent. All books are reprints of earlier editions spanning from 1960 to 1987. The earlier books are more likely to be a reading style that does not appeal to young readers of today. All the books are fairly short and quickly read, giving you the basic outlines of the individuals’ lives, perhaps opening the door for interest in learning more about a specific Christian who gave much because of their faith.


William Ashley Sunday experienced a difficult childhood, scrapping and saving, working multiple jobs to make ends meet. For recreation he played baseball. Before long he was asked to play for the Chicago Whitestockeings. He met and accepted the Lord at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. A dramatic change happened in his life—he began speaking at the Y.M.C.A’s wherever the team traveled. Eventually Billy quit baseball to go into full time ministry.

Billy Sunday became a traveling evangelist; famous for his unconventional ways, his stories, and his use of slang and physical antics on stage, he drew large crowds wanting to see the “show” which resulted in many coming to know the Lord by walking the “Sawdust Trail” to the front of the revival tent.

Sawdust Trail Preacher follows the entire path of Billy Sunday’s life and ministry. He is shown as a real man with faults and failures to go along with his passion for ministry.


Colin Powell by Anne Schraff is a biography that helps explain how a poor African American boy from the Bronx became a hero. Where others saw his tenement neighborhood as a slum, Powell saw it as “a neat place to grow up.” Being surrounded by violence and drugs did not deter him at all as a youth, as he did not want to waste the life God had given him. His positive attitude kept him from giving into bitterness when he was faced with prejudice and discrimination. Instead, he worked hard to prove himself.

Another aspect of Powell’s success is his drive and determination. Even though he was not considered a scholar, he was named Distinguished Military Graduate in 1958. He saw being a soldier as something he could belong to despite his color or financial background. From his days in ROTC to becoming the youngest man to ever be named chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell has taken whatever task and challenge was before him and met it. His winning attitude and steadfastness have won the respect and admiration of many.

Schraff presents a simple but thorough biography of Colin Powell. Throughout Schraff shows Powell as crediting his family and God as the strong influences in his life. A worthwhile biography to add to any library as Powell’s life is an encouragement and an inspiration to young people.


Concentration camp. Those two words immediately bring pictures flashing before our eyes. Most of us think of Jewish adults in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. But what about an Australian school boy in occupied China?

A Boy’s War is the true story of David Michell, a young student at Chefoo School in China in 1942 when the Japanese invaded. After taking over the school grounds, the Japanese imprisoned the students with hundreds of other prisoners of war in the Weihsien Concentration Camp. For four long years David and his friends lived through adventures that could have been a waking nightmare. David gives great credit to their teachers who were imprisoned with them, for protecting the students from some of the horrors and worries.

One of the brightest spots in David’s imprisonment was Olympic champion Eric Liddel. Eric, after winning the Olympic gold medal in 1924, went to serve as a missionary teacher in China. He was imprisoned at Weihsien, where he died months before their rescue.

After release from imprisonment David dedicated his life to spreading the gospel, as his parents had done before him. In 1985 David Michell returned to Weishan with his sixteen-year-old son and several others. This difficult trip brought vivid memories and the comfort of closure.

Though A Boy’s War revolves around a depressing topic, its positive approach provides valuable insight into concentration camp life through the eyes of a child. Included in the book are several black and white pictures and copies of letters, etc. that help remind the reader that this story is not a fairy tale, but blatantly real life.

Acceptability - 5

Quality - 5

Pam Webb
Freelance Writer, Homeschool Parent
Priest River, Idaho


Concentration camp. Those two words immediately bring pictures flashing before our eyes. Most of us think of Jewish adults in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. But what about an Australian school boy in occupied China?

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Acceptability - 5

Quality - 5

Barbara Beyer
ACSI Missions Project Coordinator
Colorado Springs, Colorado

It is the day after Jesus’ crucifixion. Mary Magdalene and the other women who followed him have gathered together to comfort one another. As Mary Magdalene talks about Christ’s ministry and death, the various women interject their personal experiences. ‘Lydia,’ the woman with an issue of blood, tells what it was like to be an outcast because of her illness and how Jesus healed her. ‘Rhoda,’ the badly stooped woman in Luke 13, was also isolated by disability. Mary Magdalene’s demon possession, of course, sets her apart, even after her cure.

Other women followed him because of his teaching or his goodness, women like Joanna, wife of Herod’s steward. Another is Susanna, whom Ashcroft imagines as an older woman who might have heard Jesus teach in the synagogue. And, of course, Salome, mother of James and John, and Lazarus’ sisters are there as well and have stories to share.

All the women are aware of how unusual Jesus was in his respect for, and interest in, women, radical behavior like that inevitably brought him into conflict with the authorities. Through their conversations, the women come to see how his death fulfilled the messianic prophecies and was the deepest expression of his love for men and women. As the night ends, they renew their commitment to his way of life, and Mary Magdalene prepares the spices to anoint his body, a last act of love from all of them.

Ashcroft, an associate professor of English, gives familiar Bible stories a fresh feminine perspective without distorting Scripture. She brings out the historical context of Jesus’ actions and how various human beings would inevitably react to his words and actions. The women sound like any bereaved family. I wish their personalities were more sharply distinguished in speech. However, their sometime fragmentary, sometimes lengthy, reminiscences have a natural rhythm that unifies the tale. The book works well as a complete novel and as a series of meditations on Christ, appropriate for classes or retreats. Ashcroft’s fine use of language and the timeless subject matter make this a good addition to any library collection.

◆ Quality - 4

Karen Orfistelli
Freelance Writer
Manchester, Connecticut


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Other women followed him because of his teaching or his goodness, women like Joanna, wife of Herod’s steward. Another is Susanna, whom Ashcroft imagines as an older woman who might have heard Jesus teach in the synagogue. And, of course, Salome, mother of James and John, and Lazarus’ sisters are there as well and have stories to share.

All the women are aware of how unusual Jesus was in his respect for, and interest in, women, radical behavior like that inevitably brought him into conflict with the authorities. Through their conversations, the women come to see how his death fulfilled the messianic prophecies and was the deepest expression of his love for men and women. As the night ends, they renew their commitment to his way of life, and Mary Magdalene prepares the spices to anoint his body, a last act of love from all of them.

Ashcroft, an associate professor of English, gives familiar Bible stories a fresh feminine perspective without distorting Scripture. She brings out the historical context of Jesus’ actions and how various human beings would inevitably react to his words and actions. The women sound like any bereaved family. I wish their personalities were more sharply distinguished in speech. However, their sometime fragmentary, sometimes lengthy, reminiscences have a natural rhythm that unifies the tale. The book works well as a complete novel and as a series of meditations on Christ, appropriate for classes or retreats. Ashcroft’s fine use of language and the timeless subject matter make this a good addition to any library collection.

◆ Quality - 4
◆ Acceptability - 5

Karen Orfistelli
Freelance Writer
Manchester, Connecticut
Fr. John O’Malley pastors St. Francis Mission on Wyoming’s Wind River Reservation. As a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, he’s hoisted his share of drunks into his truck, but the body he finds is passed on, not passed out. Worse, by the time he finds a phone and gets the police to the site, the corpse has disappeared. Now he not only has an untimely death among his congregation but a revival of the traditional Arapaho fear of ghosts to worry about.

His friend, Indian attorney Vicky Holden, has her worries as well. Her daughter Susan is home from Los Angeles and staying with an unsavory group of friends at her father’s remote cabin. More troubling, it looks like Susan’s back on drugs. Vicky carries a lot of guilt for taking the children from their father, even though he was an abusive alcoholic, and for giving them to her parents to raise while she went to law school. Ensuring Susan’s safety is, therefore, overwhelmingly important to Vicky, and she expects Fr. O’Malley’s whole-hearted support.

He wants to give it, but he fears Susan is mixed up in murder. He’s also running out of time to help anyone. His Jesuit superiors have sold the mission property to a recreational developer. O’Malley knows most of his congregation would not feel comfortable worshipping with the whites in town, even if they could manage the long drive. And he and his eccentric associate pastor love the 100-year-old mission too much to give it up without a fight. Eventually, O’Malley unearths and blocks a Mob scheme to bring casino gambling to the reservation and to use the remote area as a drug manufacturing center.

This second adventure of Fr. O’Malley and Vicky Holden offers more suspense and complexity than the first in the series, The Eagle Catcher. O’Malley loves Vicky without violating his vows, even mentally. He loves the Arapaho as well, and readers learn more about how Native Americans reconcile their traditional beliefs and practices with Christianity. Coel’s Indians have their problems, notably poverty and alcoholism, but they also have dignity and a concern for one another that she clearly admires. Her work will inevitably be compared to Tony Hillerman’s more famous novels, but Coel stands up well to the comparison. Her characters are believable and admirable, her stories wholesome and informative, and her Christian outlook clear but unsentimental. All in all, a great find for mystery lovers.


It is the turbulent late 1960’s. In Robert Funderburk’s novel The Fires of Autumn, readers meet Dylan St. John, a Southern Louisiana parole officer who is trying to cope with the problems of his marriage, his job, and his cynicism.

There are two main plots. One is whether or not St. John and his wife can reconcile their marriage, and the other is St. John’s investigation of children who are disappearing while in the state’s custody. While the conflict between St. John and his wife Susan is developed, there is not as much unfolding in St. John’s investigation of missing children. The story starts out focusing on a eleven-year-old boy being sent away to detention, but this plot becomes lost and secondary to the attention given to St. John’s personal struggles.

Funderburk’s writing style is prose-like which lends softness to the sober plot. Perhaps in the upcoming continuation of the Dylan St. John series the author will allow the plot to run its full course, and flesh out the story’s cast.


Rachel Hume is the daughter of an itinerant laborer. Her extended family, including foster children, is held together on its travels through Texas and Louisiana by the faith and love of her mother Bethanna. Bethanna is such a powerful presence that Rachel compares her to “the only piece of furniture in the house.” The Humes are committed evangelical Christians. Rachel has felt God’s healing power come into the room when Bethanna prays. So she follows her mother’s wishes completely when it comes to avoiding occasions for sin, such as the attentions of a young soldier named Jim. Jim, however, is persistent. He accepts that their courtship will be slow and that Rachel will not be a wife until she is old enough. Eventually, O’Malley unearths and blocks a Mob scheme to bring casino gambling to the reservation and to use the remote area as a drug manufacturing center.

She soon realizes that certain public sectors don’t want the book written. She becomes the target of journalistic and physical attacks. Theodora turns for help to physician Ken Holman, a man with a personal stake in the controversy. What begins as a search for information rapidly deepens into romance.

The proposal leads to Bio Tech Industries, a corporation which recycles fetal tissue into treatments for chronic diseases. Bio Tech’s directors fear that widespread knowledge of an abortion-breast cancer link will decrease the number of abortions, diminish supplies of fetal tissue, and lower profits. Their tactics, which include murder and bombing, aim to portray Theodora as a deranged anti-choice radical. Theodora learns that passive disapproval of abortion is not an option for her. She also learns to abandon her self-confidence and trust God.

Hunt writes in a clean, uncluttered manner. Plenty of action keeps The Proposal moving until a climax where Theodora’s life hangs by a thread. The ending, though, is somewhat


Theodora Russell, the aspiring writer heroine of Angela Hunt’s medical thriller The Proposal, is not a pro-life activist. Widow, Sunday school teacher, and mother, she opposes abortion but has never taken an active stance. At a writing conference, a case of mistaken identity lands her with another writer’s book proposal—a proposal that links breast cancer to early abortion. When the other author disappears—and is later found dead—Theodora decides to pursue the story.

She soon realizes that certain public sectors don’t want the book written. She becomes the target of journalistic and physical attacks. Theodora turns for help to physician Ken Holman, a man with a personal stake in the controversy. What begins as a search for information rapidly deepens into romance.

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melodramatic and implausible. Theodore’s character is the best drawn, that of Ken Holman less well, and we learn little beyond the obvious of the personalities or motives of The Proposal’s antagonists.

Hunt quotes newspaper reports to add veracity to her premise, but at present the medical literature does not reflect consensus. A Medline search revealed some articles that suggest a link, and others where no correlation was found. There may be a connection between abortion and breast cancer. If there is, Hunt has done women a service by publicizing it.

Even if the abortion-breast cancer link isn’t as strong as implied, The Proposal makes several telling points concerning the ethical crises confronting us: The use, legal or otherwise, of fetal tissue as “spare-parts” for chronic illness; the importance of right moral choices both for individuals and society; and the tendency of society to reduce life to mere matter for manipulation. These issues will—eventually— affect us all. The Proposal should appeal particularly to young women.

Andrew M. Seddon
Physician, Author
Billings, Montana


Madeleine L’Engle’s fans will delight in the rebirth of her romantic novel, Love Letters. When the topic of reprinting the 1966 edition of this book was presented to L’Engle, she readily agreed as long as she could rewrite the ending. “I was never satisfied with it,” L’Engle recalls about the first edition. Love Letters is a potent, adult novel set in Portugal. Charlotte Napier, a woman whose son has recently died, flees the United States to find solace with her mother-in-law, Dame Violet Napier. During the time Charlotte is waiting for Dame Violet’s return from Paris, she discovers the letters of a Portuguese seventeenth century nun, who herself was in spiritual anguish. It is through these letters that Charlotte’s discovers an understanding of herself, her marriage, and her relationship to Patrick, her husband.

From the opening words of this spellbinding novel, L’Engle encapsulates her readers in the mind and heart of Charlotte Napier. Charlotte’s struggles, temptations, angst, and inner turmoil are not merely read about during the novel, but also experienced by the readers. This book is a spiritual journey of self-discovery, hope, and a re-commitment love.

Karen Orselli
Freelance Writer
Manchester, Connecticut


Ever since the Rapture and the disappearance of millions of people world wide, (Left Behind), Bruce Barnes has been studying the Bible and the many prophecies about this devastating event. With his own pastor gone, he now leads a steadily growing body of believers that must prepare to face the worst trials humankind has ever endured. A small force of three others, Rayford Steele, new pilot for the president’s Airforce One, along with his lovely daughter Chloe, and Buck Williams, top newspaper man for the prestigious Chicago Tribune, form the Tribulation Alliance—a small Christian organization dedicated to staying strong in the Word and sharing the truth when and where there is opportunity.

The signing of the peace treaty with Israel begins the seven year countdown to Christ’s final return, and with the prophesied short time of peace quickly passing, the fousome is aware that apocalyptic judgements are about to fall. Unusual circumstances, seemingly orchestrated by God, have allowed both Buck and Ray to be directly employed by Nicolae Carpathia—the Antichrist himself! As events begin to unfold at a rapid pace there is no longer any doubt as to the fate of the world and the believers caught in the dangerous net of Carpathia’s Global Community.

As truth of the tribulation judgments comes to light, each person must choose how to live within the framework of impending “hell on earth.” Buck questions if it is right to pursue a relationship at such a time as this, and yet, his acceptance of Jesus has somehow heightened his ability to love and give to others. With such questions strong in his mind, there is at least one thing that Buck and the others can be sure of— their deep convictions help them determine to do what is right as long as they are able.

The authors, LaHaye and Jenkins, offer a well-written, intriguing sequel about post-raptured earth. Tribulation Force not only portrays the strong influence the Antichrist has on the unsaved, but presents the dangers and inevitable suffering any new believers must face during this final time of judgment on earth. Both authors are well known in their fields; Tim LaHaye for his excellent and insightful writings, and Jerry Jenkins for his finely crafted fiction novels. They combine their talents to achieve a most thought-provoking and convicting presentation. Read in sequence or standing alone, these novels compel the reader to recognize the importance of acknowledging Jesus as their Lord and Savior. “Now is the acceptable time.” (2 Cor. 6:2)

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington


Humbled by his growing reputation as the best Northwest Mountie, Hunter Stone is relentless in fulfilling his duties beyond any expectations. Danger is always near at hand, and Hunter is ready to risk his own life before endangering any of the men that serve under him. But his heroic actions are sometimes difficult for Reena O’Donnell to understand. Caution would seem the better side of valor.

However, her own life is unsettled since she chooses to live with the suspicious and often unfriendly Blackfoot Indian tribe. Her desire to share the Gospel with them has come against many obstacles, yet she is stalwart in her efforts to win them over as friends, and hopefully as fellow converts. Admittedly, the greatest sunshine in her difficult days is when Hunter is able to visit the tribe and check on her progress.

They both must face a most dangerous situation, the illegal whiskey trade. It not only threatens the lives of innocent settlers, but often destroys the peace and stability of the Indian camps. These ruthless traders become one of Hunter’s most cunning and ominous enemies as he and Reena both determine to not only stop the shipments, but find who the supplier is. They are shocked at discovering that he is a mutual acquaintance, and forcing his hand proves to be lethal.

Alan Morris is true to form in his second novel of the Guardians of the North series. Well-written, if not a bit tedious at first in its details of recapturing the first novel’s happenings, it soon moves the reader into the new adventure with strong, likable characters and an intriguing storyline of courage and romance in the rugged Canadian wilderness. The adventure’s well-placed subplots bring new twists that promise intrigue and some interesting complications. Those with a heart for the courage and tenacity of the Mounties and this challenging era of settlement will truly enjoy Heart Of Valor.

Mary McKinney
Freelance Writer
Port Orchard, Washington

Quality - 3  Acceptability - 4
The Braxtons of Miracle Springs, the first book in Michael Phillips’s newest series, The Journals of Corrie & Christopher, is set in the Sacramento/San Francisco area of California in the 1800’s. The heroine, Corrie Belle Hollister Braxton, will be an old friend to Phillips’s fans of the seven book series, The Journals of Corrie Belle Hollister.

This book begins with Corrie’s wedding to Christopher Braxton. Corrie has waited thirty years for the man God would have her marry. They settle down in the bunkhouse on the Hollister family’s ranch. The joy of being married to Christopher and still being able to live near her family, makes Corrie realize how wonderful life is. And trusting in the Lord for this happiness seems to make life perfect.

For months the men have worked a gold mine, but the possibility of finding a big vein of gold ore becomes less likely as the lode disappears. What will the men do if the mine has finally played out? What choices will Christopher make as more and more he feels like a burden on Corrie’s family. The only solution seems to be moving off the Hollister place, but leaving her extended family is the last thing Corrie wants.

More than the worry over the failing gold mine is their concern for the welfare of those around them. How can Corrie help her friend, Jennie, whose marriage is falling apart? What can Christopher do for Alkali Jones, the old prospector whose health is failing? Or how can they help Becky, Corrie’s sister, who is feeling very much an old maid? Most of all, how can they share the love of Christ with all their friends and family?

The Braxtons of Miracle Springs is written in first person from Corrie’s point of view as you would expect in a journal. Occasionally, she breaks into the story to talk directly to the reader, as if you were in Corrie’s place. The book overall is slow-paced, relying more on sermonizing about discerning God’s will, than action to advance the plot. However, it will be the rare reader who doesn’t have moist eyes before completing the book.


In May, 1849, newlywed Aldar and Shiloh Laird arrive in San Francisco, where Aldar and his partner, Philander MacAdams, have started an express-delivery business. A week after their arrival, Aldar is murdered, leaving Shiloh alone with her mulatto, childhood friend and companion, Mara. Shiloh believes she can’t survive in that mostly male, frontier town, yet has no money for passage back to Pennsylvania. Seeking a way to earn money and to discover who murdered her husband, Shiloh becomes caught between the political forces pursuing control of the California territory.

Throughout her life, Shiloh has always submitted to others, and when trouble came, she always ran to Mara for council and comfort. Now, she must learn to handle herself in a land where only the strong survive. To earn her passage home, she agrees to take on her husband’s sales position for two weeks and travel into the gold country to secure contracts for the MacAdams and Laird express company. Clay Patton, her husband’s best friend and employee, and Mara accompany

---Quality - 4    Acceptability - 5

Esther Knapp
Librarian, Santiam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon
Shiloh. She manages to sign contracts with a few new clients, giving herself some courage. Coming home to a ransacked house crushes this new-found courage and increases Shiloh’s determination to return to the East. John Sledger, the local preacher, challenges this decision, asking her if she has prayed about going back. She thinks it is her only choice, but she agrees to pray for God’s will. By the end of Giants on the Hill, she learns to listen to the still, small voice of God, and chooses to stay in San Francisco to continue her late husband’s dream to build a successful transportation company. The mystery and adventure never stop as Shiloh, Mara, and Clay encounter one adversity after another. Filled with political intrigue, men seeking money and power, and racial and relational issues, Lee Roddy propels the reader through the book. His depiction of Shiloh’s spiritual struggles gives Giants on the Hill a strong emotional element. The twist at the end, when the identity of Aldar’s murderer is revealed, provides a suspense-filled climax.

November rain has muddied San Francisco’s streets and reduced the Laird and Patton Stage Lines business to a trickle in book 2, Cinnabar. Shiloh Laird and Clay Patton’s only hope to keep the late Aldar Laird’s stagecoach dream alive is to secure financial backing and win the United States mail contract. To get the contract, they must submit an impressive plan and prove financial solvency. However, they can’t find Aldar’s written plans for transporting the mail from Missouri to California.

Victoria Barclay arrives in San Francisco with a property deed that declares Aldar and her late husband, Henry, were joint owners of some land in Mount Saint Helena. Shiloh doesn’t believe her at first because Aldar had never mentioned owning any land. Later, she discovers the deed with a note written by Aldar stating, “The Mount Saint Helena property will pay for the stage-line contract.”

Clay hanged the twin. Now, after seven years of indecision. She wants to be a biblically submissive wife, but also wants Clay to support the Union. The war between the states threatens to create strife in their marriage. Adding stress, Mara becomes suspect of Lyman Wallace’s murder. She has been his live-in mistress, but after a fight, was kicked out of the night of his murder. Shiloh and Clay seek to discover the true murderer while the Home Guards, a self-appointed militia group that zealously defends the Union, threatens to harm their family if Clay doesn’t choose their side. In the end, Clay makes his decision for the Union. The book closes with a harrowing sea rescue of Mara and Samuel from the real murderer, Jared Huntley, and a reconciliation between Clay and Shiloh.

Shiloh’s Choice opens with the people of San Francisco rioting in Market Street on January 1, 1861. And they are not ringing in the New Year. The Pony Express brought news that South Carolina has just withdrawn from the Union on December 20. Though living in a new state, loyalties to the states of their birth tug hard on the citizens of California, and people take sides. Several try to pressure Clay Patton, now wealthy from the successful stage-coach business and quicksilver mine, to financially support their causes. Clay at first refuses to take sides, but wrestles with the Constitutional issues of state’s rights and the rights of individuals, especially after President Lincoln suspended the right of habeas corpus. Clay’s Texan birth and oath of loyalty to the Union when he had served in the Army during two wars added to his internal conflict. Shiloh, raised by abolitionists, supports the Union, whereas Clay, raised by the Home Guards, supports the Union and struggles with her husband’s indecision. Shiloh speaks of Aldar’s dream to live in Fern Hill, but the Pattons never get there.

Shiloh. He thought he could never love again after losing his Elizabeth. Cinnabar closes with Clay and Shiloh’s wedding.
end making individual reading a frustrating experience.

◆ Quality - 3  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Janyre Stockinger
Student, Taylor University
Grand Rapids, Michigan


Autumn, 1931, and the bottom has just dropped out of the cotton market. Shiloh, Arkansas, is entering on desperate days. Human vultures gather to garner the pieces the cotton farmers and their tenants can no longer hold together. The black Canfield family are tenant farmers and close friends of Birch Tucker, his Jewish wife Trudy, and their three children. As neighbors, they face the disintegration of absolutely everything that has made up their lives. The only things that remain true and unchanging are their Lord, the faith he has given them, and the love and respect they bear for each other.

In the similar tradition of Louis L’Amour’s historical sagas, Shiloh Autumn helps hold Americans together by presenting our nation’s history at the family level. This book presents Bodie’s own grandparent’s depression-era experience. The characterizations of the main characters are full, growing throughout the story.

Reviewed elsewhere in this month’s CLJ is an investigation into the church’s ministry role to the disintegrating community, It Takes A Church Within A Village by H. B. London & Neil Wiseman. Shiloh Autumn is a good companion book to It Takes A Church. Each book presents many similar problems, but from two perspectives, fiction and reality. Both graphically present God’s victorious, healing power.

◆ Quality 4  ❤ Acceptability 4

Donna Eggert
CPC Secretary and Counselor/Freelance Writer
Maiden, North Carolina


Augusta Trobaugh’s fiction novel Praise Jerusalem! is an insightful look inside the mind of Miss Amelia, a genteel Southern lady who faces the humiliation of not being able to keep up a front of affluence in the community. Rather than admit that she cannot keep up her beautiful home, she gives it to the town as a library and leaves under cover of night to face a new life with Maybeline, a companion with a questionable background.

Miss Amelia takes up Maybeline’s offer of moving to live in the long deserted house of Maybeline’s granddaddy in Jerusalem, Georgia, that she had inherited along with all of her cousins. Amelia puts up with Maybeline’s irritating ways including her “religious” fervor only because she has no other choice if she wants to save her pride. Along the way, they are joined by the black “Mrs. Johnson” who has long tried to escape from her abusive husband and the clutches of discrimination and oppression that have made her feel like a second class citizen. As these three unlikely individuals set up housekeeping in their Jerusalem, they each face their own unique problems.

Throughout the entire novel, Amelia, the central character, has flashbacks to her childhood and early memories, and continually refers to “the great mystery” that continues to plague her. It isn’t until the very end of the book that the meaning is clear.

This story is excellent in the way that it deals with the inner struggles of a child that continue on into adulthood, struggles relevant to everyone. The book talks about speaking in tongues and about Old Auntie not being able to go to heaven because she has not been baptized.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 4

Esther Knaupp, Librarian
Santiam Christian School
Corvallis, Oregon


Based on the 1992 Amish barn fires in Big Valley, Pennsylvania, author Ted Wojtasik weaves a marvelous web of intrigue and mystery. Set in modern times, readers get an accurate, respectful, and inside look at the why’s and how’s of the Amish community. This author deals specifically with the Nebraska Amish, the strictest of the various sects.

In the opening pages, the barn fires are in full swing, burning down a total of six Amish families’ livelihoods. Tragically, one young Amish boy dies in an attempt to rescue his colt from the burning building. The neighboring Amish family also must deal with tragedy of another sort. One of their eldest twin sons, Jacob, has left the Amish community for life with the Englisch (non-Amish). His struggle to find his place in this world forces him to break away from his family, his heritage, and his faith. Harder yet, is the rumor that wayward Jacob has somehow been involved with the setting of the Amish fires.

As detectives enter in the picture and begin questioning both Amish and Englisch alike, an eerie pattern starts to materialize. Jacob’s car is found near the scene, but he is missing. Not until the end do we discover the instigator in this page turning whodunit. Alternating by chapters, we are taken from present day happenings to a period beginning nine months earlier. Especially interesting are the long held beliefs and traditions clung to by the Amish themselves. New insight into their ways are explained with such deftness and ease that the explanations become a natural part of the story itself. No Strange Fire is an excellent book to read to gain greater admiration of this faithful people of God.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan

*Lament for a Son* has tears on every page. A father’s journal, this chronicle begins with Mr. Wolterstorff’s twenty-five-year-old son’s death. It proceeds painfully through the stages of his grief: shock, bargaining, denial, anger, and ends at his reluctant acceptance of Eric’s death.

At first, Mr. Wolterstorff is in complete shock, a common reaction among bereaved parents. Later he gladly offers his own life to God instead of Eric’s. He reports that there are times when he is expecting a call from Eric that never comes. His anger comes at unexpected times for him and shocks and frightens him. Toward the end, Mr. Wolterstorff turns to God for answers and comfort.

The early part of the book is filled with entries on the funeral, sorting through Eric’s belongings, responding to friends’ correspondence, etc. The latter part of the book turns to beautiful, poetic soul searching. Many psalms are recorded as comforting along with writings of T.S. Elliot and C. S. Lewis.

One of the most moving parts of the book is the copy of the six part requiem that Mr. and Mrs. Wolterstorff had commissioned in Eric’s memory. It is a longing love song to a shortened life.

◆ Quality - 5    ❤ Acceptability - 5

Anita Goldman Horning
Freelance Writer
Lawrenceville, Georgia


Gilbert Meilaender, professor of theological ethics at Valparaiso University, surveys society’s prevailing outlook on medical ethics and finds it at variance with what the Christian perspective should be. According to the author this is not a new dilemma, but it has been exacerbated by rapid medical and technical advances.

Many of the procedures and treatments that we take for granted are surprisingly recent. For example, amniocentesis began only in 1966; the first heart transplant was in 1967; and the first living will law dates from only 1976; genetic engineering and surrogate parenthood are phenomena of the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Exploration of specific practices such as abortion, organ donation, suicide and euthanasia, genetic screening, and surrogate parenthood are tied together by the author and used to exemplify the larger issues of how a “person” is defined, whether or not pain and suffering must always be mitigated, and the attitude God allows us as his creatures to modify ourselves.

The book is an ethical argument as well as an overview of the bioethical status quo. The author reviews biological authority, Christian and Jewish tradition, and secular philosophy on the issues. He also describes the legal decisions and scientific developments that have made these issues so difficult. Meilaender advocates a clear position on each issue.

The author writes lucidly and hopefully about some fairly deep issues. It is not exactly pleasant reading, but it is crucially important for the Christian to face the implications of these issues for himself and for society. This is a book which makes the reader examine his first principles as a Christian and, perhaps, sweat a little over having listened to the siren song of advanced technology and harkened to the lure of the possible.

Overall, Meilaender feels that we meddle with God’s creation at the peril of dehumanizing ourselves and distancing ourselves from him. Meilaender says, “we also need to develop the trust and the courage that will enable us circumstances to which we can save life only by destroying the kind of world in which we all should want to live.”

Although the book was published before the recent news regarding the cloning of sheep, it is safe to say the author would vigorously oppose the cloning of humans.

◆ Quality - 5    ❤ Acceptability - 5

David W. Rash
Public Services Librarian
Everett Community College
Everett, Washington


Naturalists are those “who assume that God exists only as an idea in the minds of religious believers.” Under naturalist philosophy, there is no possibility of intelligent design of the universe or its inhabitants, and no possibility of any kind of divine intervention in human affairs, miraculous or providential. Although polls show that most Americans say they believe in God or a god, Johnson very persuasively argues that our society is thoroughly dominated by the philosophy of naturalism and that this has profound implications for everyday life.

For example, Johnson, a law professor, uses actual court cases to show how naturalism has sometimes biased the judicial system against religion. He shows that by classifying a viewpoint as “religious” it can “have the effect of marginalizing it.” In other words, religious ideas are often “excluded from serious consideration” without necessarily interacting with their essential arguments and without refuting them. Johnson demonstrates this by citing court cases in which people were ordered to stop teaching certain viewpoints not because they were wrong, but simply because they were classified as religious and therefore not allowed on university campuses.

One of the most powerful examples of bias was the case of a university professor who, when introducing himself at the beginning of each semester, would make reference to his own Christian belief. And although he never lectured against the idea of random evolution of the human body in class, he made no secret of his skepticism regarding this theory. This professor was not only ordered to cease all such remarks in class, but was told that he could not meet with students to discuss such issues on his own time either!

Johnson also demonstrates that in the sciences, naturalism has almost become synonymous with rationality. He quotes Harvard paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson as saying that the meaning, or guiding premise behind the theory of evolution, is that “man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.” This, Johnson says, is the guiding assumption behind all of modern science. To propose that God not only objectively exists, but
is in fact in some way behind the creation and development of life in the universe, is often to have ones very rationality brought into question.

In the field of education, Johnson shows how naturalism works its way out in the teaching of values (or lack thereof), for example in sex education, drug education, family values, and abortion. He shows how religion is tolerated so long as it is marginalized into the area of personal subjective beliefs, but when religion emerges as a proposal for objective reality which should influence how values are taught, it is either ignored, ridiculed, or violently attacked.

Johnson was particularly surprised by the number of Christian professors who “were staunch defenders of the evolutionary orthodoxy.” He takes to task those professors who, while professing to believe in God, methodologically exclude any possibility of God’s intervention from their disciplines.

Philip Johnson “is a graduate of Harvard and the University of Chicago. He was a law clerk for Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court, and has taught law for over twenty years at the University of California at Berkeley.” His book is easy to read and hard to put down. It is well indexed and has extensive end notes for more detailed discussion.

It is hard to rate the acceptability of such a potentially controversial book. For example, Christian educators or scientists who have unwittingly adopted a naturalistic outlook on life may find the book quite objectionable or very enlightening. Either way, this book deserves to be on everyone’s reading list!

- Quality - 5  
- Acceptability - 4

Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee


An Old Testament “Introduction” is a book which deals with issues of authorship, dates, themes, style, literary analysis, and historical background. Dillard and Longman discuss these issues individually for each book of the Old Testament beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi. Each chapter deals with one book of the Old Testament and, with some exceptions, generally follows the same pattern: first there is a brief introduction to the Old Testament book covered in that chapter, followed by a bibliography of significant books and articles. This is usually followed by a section on historical background which discusses the date and authorship of the book, and gives an overview of the historical period during which the book was written. This section is often followed by one on literary analysis which deals with the genre, style, and literary structure. Next is a discussion on the theological message of the book and finally there is a section called “approaching the New Testament.” This last section shows how each particular Old Testament book was used in the New Testament or how the themes of that book influenced or anticipated New Testament themes.

In the past, evangelical “introductions” were often somewhat defensive or apologetic in nature. Dillard and Longman tend rather to focus more on issues necessary for the understanding of the text itself: background, literary analysis, and the theological message of each book. To be sure, the authors do interact adequately and fairly with higher critical opinion, but that is not the main focus of their book.

Dillard and Longman are both evangelical Old Testament scholars with Ph.D.’s from Dropsie and Yale respectively. While both are theologically conservative, I have rated the acceptability of this book as “4” rather than “5” because they take some positions which some evangelicals may view as compromises. For example, some may not be comfortable acknowledging the existence of “pre-Mosaic sources and post-Mosaic glosses” in the Pentateuch, both of which are affirmed by Dillard and Longman. Another example is that the authors seem to allow for the possibility that Isaiah 40-66 was not written by Isaiah but rather by an anonymous prophet who “foresaw through divine inspiration what God was about to do through Cyrus.”

I found Dillard and Longman to be quite fair, objective, and very informative. Although the book dealt with complicated scholarly issues, it was clear, concise, and easy to read. It would make an outstanding textbook for college or seminary introduction or survey courses on the Old Testament.

- Quality - 5  
- Acceptability - 4

Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee


The idea that the Gospels are not biographies has been scholarly dogma for nearly one hundred years. Rudolph Bultmann, for example, did not believe that the Gospel writers had any interest in historical or biographical matters. Non-evangelicals generally agree that the Gospel writers were “theologians” who were trying to make a point, but were not intending to convey actual historical or biographical information about Jesus of Nazareth.

Richard Burridge is one of several recent scholars to challenge this view in his book, What are the Gospels? He begins with several introductory chapters on the nature of ancient biography as a literary genre. He goes on to give a detailed summary and critical evaluation of scholarly Gospel genre debate, and concludes with an extended and detailed comparison between the Gospels and ten examples of ancient biographies. He compares specific features such as the titles, prologues, subject matter, length, structure, sequence, style, etc. The book ends with computer analysis charts of these features.

What are the Gospels? is a revised version of Burridge’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Nottingham in England. As a Greco-Roman scholar, Burridge expected his study to confirm the scholarly consensus that the Gospels were not biographies. Contrary to his expectations, his study concluded that the Gospels are indeed ancient biographies.

This book is well written and contains graphs, copious footnotes, and a good bibliography. It also has indexes of names, subjects and passages cited. The significance of Burridge’s work is considerable. If his thesis is accepted, the view that the Gospel writers were not interested in historical or biographical details of Jesus’ life should be finally be put to rest.

- Quality - 5  
- Acceptability - 5

Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible
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Luke which is word-for-word identical with Matthew? In answer to this question, some scholars speculated that there was once another source from which Matthew and Luke borrowed. Scholars call this source “Q,” short for the German Quelle. Recent scholarship has taken the Q theory to extremes, postulating that there was a Q community, that Q went through at least two revisions, that we can know what the Q people did not believe based on what they left out, and that we can even trace the history of the Q community, all based on a hypothetical document!

Some scholars, however, have questioned the very existence of Q, pointing out the serious flaws in the Q theory (known as the two source, or four source theory). They have proposed instead that Luke not only knew of Matthew’s Gospel, but used it as one of his sources, thus eliminating the need to postulate a lost “Q” gospel. But no one has ever done a passage by passage study to show exactly how Luke used Matthew, and what his methodology or reasons were until now.

Beyond the Impasse is that book. It reflects the research of a team of scholars from Harvard, Vanderbilt, Union Seminary, Southern Methodist University and McMaster University. The book is divided into two main parts: Introduction and Compositional Analysis. In the Introduction the authors demonstrate that Luke went systematically through the Gospel of Matthew in several “cycles” to select material for his history. They also demonstrate how the linguistic evidence points to Luke’s use of Matthew. They give examples of numerous instances in which grammatical constructions characteristic of Matthew are found in Luke only in places which are parallel to Matthew. The authors then give an overview of Luke’s “compositional techniques” or literary characteristics peculiar to Luke’s Gospel. In the Compositional Analysis section the authors work through the entire book of Luke passage by passage to show how and why Luke used his sources to produce his Gospel.

Overall, I found the evidence to be very compelling! The arguments for Luke’s “cyclical” use of Matthew and the arguments from grammatical constructions were especially so. However, while the evidence overall is convincing, many of the speculations as to why Luke used, wrote, or changed what he did, are not. McNicol, Dungan and Peabody do not write from an evangelical perspective and this comes out clearly in some of their speculations. Therefore, although I have rated the quality “5,” I have only rated the acceptability as “3” because of the liberal presuppositions which come out in especially in the Compositional Analysis section. The book has a short bibliography, but is well indexed and contains several valuable charts, including some inserted into a pocket inside the back cover.

Beyond the Impasse: Luke’s use of Matthew is truly a ground breaking book. Since it completely eliminates the need to postulate a lost Gospel, it has the potential for changing the whole course of Gospel studies. Furthermore, it will be hard to take future publications seriously which assume the existence of Q but have not interacted with the evidence of this book.

Quality - 5    Acceptability - 3
Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee


There is a general scholarly consensus that the Gospel of Mark was written in the late 60’s AD and that Matthew and Luke were written in the 80’s or 90’s AD. Scholars generally believe that Matthew and Luke used, and expanded on, the Gospel of Mark and another gospel they call “Q” (now lost).

John Wenham is the latest scholar to call this theory into question. Wenham argues that the ancient tradition which says Matthew wrote first is correct. He argues that the Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew as early as 40 AD. Wenham then argues that the early tradition about Mark writing from the sermons of Peter is also correct. He dates Mark to about 45 AD and Luke to the mid-50’s.

Although Wenham’s book is divided into twelve chapters, for our purposes we really need to distinguish two parts. The first part, chapters 1-4, discuss “synoptic” relationships and are really quite technical. Although the average lay person might be able to understand the gist of Wenham’s arguments in this part, a good knowledge of Greek is essential to follow it completely. The second part, however, is very understandable and quite fascinating. In this part Wenham discusses ancient testimony to the authorship and date of the Gospels, and reconstructs a possible scenario for when and where they were written. It is not necessary to understand (or even read) the first part to understand the second part.

Wenham is a well known author and New Testament scholar. The implications for his work are enormous. If he is correct, theories about the gospels being based on prolonged and exaggerated oral traditions would crumble. The need to postulate a lost Gospel of Q, which is foundational for many modern attacks against Jesus, would evaporate. For those interested in a study of the history of Gospel origins, Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke is a must.

Quality - 5    Acceptability - 5
Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee
John Stott is known worldwide as an outstanding scholar, pastor, Bible teacher, and evangelist. Stott is conservative in his theology and is not denominational in his writing. One of the most controversial elements of the Book of Acts centers on the spiritual gifts. On this issue, Stott is open to the working of the Holy Spirit today, but is also cautious. Strongly charismatic churches will not agree with Stott’s treatment of this topic, nor will those who believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased. But for everyone who wants to understand the Book of Acts better, and know how it applies to life in the 20th century, The Message of Acts is a great source!

Dennis Ingolfsland
Director of Library Services/Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee


The twentieth century has witnessed a shift in philosophical outlook from modernism to postmodernism, a movement that relegates reason, rationality, and confidence in science to mere cultural biases. People are prisoners of culture, slaves of languages that inhibit cross-cultural communication. Intuition replaces reason. There is no absolute truth, no absolute standards, no objective reality. Reality is in the mind of the beholder; each person constructs reality in his or her own mind. Humans beings aren’t born, but defined.

In The Death of Truth, editor Dennis McCullum has assembled a of contributors to explain postmodernism in layperson’s terms. The stated aim is to make the concepts and effects of postmodernist thinking clear to readers who lack formal philosophical training.

Introductory chapters explain the rise of modernism and postmodernism, and contrast them to theistic thought and belief. Subsequent chapters relate postmodernist thought to various aspects of contemporary society—health care, literature, education, history, psychotherapy, law, science, and religion. Each chapter critiques postmodernism’s influences, demonstrates contradictions and inconsistencies, and, on occasion, points out instances where postmodernism is valid. Postmodernism is compared and contrasted to biblical, evangelical Christianity.

For example, the chapter on health care shows how postmodernist thought ties in to New Age and “alternative” medicine; a field ripe with ineffective medicine and hypotheses without proof, where any belief works. The chapter on religion points out that postmodernism regards biblical Christianity as a “junk religion.” In its place, postmodernism offers intolerance under the guise of tolerance, and a creed where no view is superior to any other, where judgments and concrete values are excluded, and where rational consistency finds no place. The final chapters point out postmodernism’s particular dangers for Christianity, and offer suggestions for how Christians can respond and combat postmodernism’s suppositions. Postmodernism is ultimately viewed as a contradictory, self-defeating philosophy.

Some chapters are more easily read than others, but in general the authors’ aims of clear, non-technical exposition are realized. Each chapter contains notes and references. Charts reduce the concepts to an easy to grasp visual format. The Death of Truth contains a glossary, index, and references for further research. The Death of Truth should appeal to those with an interest in the relationship of philosophy and Christianity to contemporary society.

Andrew M. Seddon
Physician, author
Billings, Montana


The author Chip Ricks attempts to explain how we fit into God’s perfect will through reiteration of familiar scripture and quotes. He reminds us that God has always blessed his people by allowing them to serve within his plan when they obey him.

Using personal examples and anecdotes, the author of The Plans Of His Heart teaches how the reader can become a more dedicated Christian, and each chapter finishes in questions for a self-administered questionnaire on rating oneself as to spiritual readiness.

Chapters include background about how Jesus evaluated churches—things that pleased him and things that displeased him. Listed are warnings to churches and individuals that are as relevant today as they were during Jesus’ time. Emphasizing that churches need especially to be training teachers and caring for others, the importance of reaching out to the world is underscored. Ricks asks why we seem to be afraid of spreading God’s word, and deals with some of the reasons.

There is a section on burned-out Christians, who have done the Lord’s work for years, and are often overextended in their church duties. Ricks’ solution is taken from Bible references, to focus not on “the works,” but on the Lord. We are harming ourselves if we become overextended in church work. We need to train others in our jobs, to say “no” to a request for a new assignment. “Jesus first” is the key to a steadfast faith. We are reminded to remember God’s wonders and miracles and the judgments he has pronounced.

In fact, “remember” is mentioned 130 times in the Old Testament. Also stressed is the importance of forgiveness. When we do not forgive, it is damaging to us, both spiritually and physically. Of equal importance is forgiving ourselves.

This book would be suitable for a study book, since there are questions at the end of each chapter. At the end of the book is a rating for a personal profile to test areas of strengths and weaknesses in our lives. It does take a long time to get into the meat of this book, though, and original suggestions do not begin until about midway.

Barbara Goy Taenzler
Freelance Writer and Book Reviewer
Mesa, Arizona


John Dominic Crossan and Burton Mack are two outspoken scholars who are attempting to re-write the story of Jesus. In their view, very little of what is written in the Gospels can be trusted and Jesus was not, therefore, the Messiah, nor the Son of God. He did not do genuine miracles and certainly did not raise from the dead. He was simply an itinerant Cynic philosopher who enjoyed poking holes in the contemporary wisdom of his day. Crossan and Mack’s books are often quite scholarly in nature and could be very convincing to those without a scholarly background in Biblical studies.

Cynic Sage or Son of God is a detailed critique of the theories of Mack and Crossan. Boyd begins with an excellent overview of the first, second and third quests for the historical Jesus. He then shows how Crossan and Mack, individually, make their case for Jesus as the Cynic Sage. As he does this, Boyd also points out and evaluates the philosophical presuppositions and methodological considerations underlying the Cynic thesis. He ends the first section of the book by evaluating the non-Biblical and hypothetical sources used by Crossan and Mack in supporting their view. Since the Cynic Sage thesis requires a complete re-writing of Christian history, its proponents therefore attempt to down-
Since Jesus is the very foundation of the Christian faith, attacks against New Testament reliability and against Jesus himself must be taken very seriously. *Jesus Under Fire* is a good introduction to those issues by conservative evangelical scholars.

### Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

**Dennis Ingolfsland**
Director of Library Services/Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee

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The Jesus Seminar is a group of scholars who met for seven years to discuss which of the sayings recorded in the Gospels actually go back to Jesus. Their results, published in the book *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (Macmillan, 1993), were that Jesus did not say most of the sayings attributed to him in the Gospels. Some members of the Jesus Seminar have gone on to call into question the whole biblical image of Jesus.

*Jesus Under Fire* is a collection of essays written in answer to the Jesus Seminar’s attacks on the biblical presentation of Jesus. The essays are written by prominent evangelical scholars including Craig Blomberg, Darrell Bock, Craig Evans, Gary Habermas, William Lang Craig, Edwin Yamauchi, and others. The book gives a discussion and evaluation of the Jesus Seminar, followed by essays on the reliability of the Gospels, the historical evidence for Jesus’ life, and issues involving Jesus’ miracles and resurrection. The authors show that, contrary to some segments of modern scholarship, there are very good reasons to believe that the New Testament presents the Cynic Sage or Son of God who Jesus really was.

The book is written for the average adult lay person but includes more notes and explanations among the end notes for each chapter. It contains author, subject, and Scripture indices, and a bibliography of resources for further study.

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Although the market is flooded with books about Jesus these days, most of them are from non-evangelical authors, and almost none of those from evangelical authors are surveys of Jesus’ life. In fact, it has been twenty-five years or more since such excellent evangelical “Lives of Jesus” appeared as Donald Guthrie’s *Jesus the Messiah*, or Everett Harrison’s *A Short Life of Christ*.

But Jesus hasn’t changed over the years so is there really a need for a new life of Jesus? In short, yes! New documents have been discovered (or imagined), new questions have been raised, new attacks have been launched, and new battles are being fought. The time is right for a new book which discusses Jesus’ life in the light of the latest evidence, and which deals squarely with the latest issues.

Stein’s *Jesus the Messiah* is that book. Stein begins with several introductory chapters showing how presuppositions influence Jesus studies, evaluating Christian and non-Christian sources for the life of Jesus, and addressing some of the main chronological issues. Part two consists of sixteen additional chapters which each address a particular aspect of Jesus’ life: for example, the baptism, temptation, Jesus’ message, the transfiguration, Last Supper, trial, death, and resurrection. In each chapter, Stein addresses critical views, historical matters, and interpretive issues adequately and fairly. It is refreshing to see a scholar, when confronted with a particularly difficult problem, conclude that an adequate solution has yet to be found, rather than picking a proposed solution and arguing for it, right or wrong.

Robert Stein is a professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary and author of numerous books on Jesus and the Gospels. Although he writes from a very scholarly background, Stein has the ability to take very complex issues and make them understandable to the average lay person. The book has helpful bibliographic references at the end of each chapter, as well as good indexes of subject and literary references. It would be an excellent textbook.

### Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

**Dennis Ingolfsland**
Director of Library Services/Assistant Professor of Bible
Bryan College, Tennessee

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In the nineteenth century some New Testament scholars began to question the value of the Gospels as historical sources for the life of Jesus. Numerous “Lives” of Jesus were then written to explain what Jesus was “really” like. These attempts usually involved explaining away the supernatural element in the Gospels. This “first quest for the historical Jesus” eventually ended in disillusionment over what could be known about the real Jesus.

In the 1950’s a new quest was begun by some who thought that earlier skepticism may have been too extreme. This second quest, however, was strongly influenced by existentialist philosophy, so when existentialism began to decrease in popularity, so did the second quest. It died out in the early 1970’s. We are now in the middle of a third quest for the historical Jesus and the market is being flooded with books and articles about Jesus, with views ranging from the bazaar to the sublime.

Witherington helps to guide the reader through the rash of recent literature about the historical Jesus. His book distinguishes numerous views of Jesus: The Cynic philosopher, the man of the Spirit, the eschatological prophet, the prophet of social change, the expression of the Wisdom of God, and the Jewish Messiah. Under each major view he tells who the main proponents are, summarizes their views and the reasons for holding those views, and then critiques each one from a scholarly evangelical perspective.

Witherington is a professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary and author of several books in New Testament studies. *The Jesus Quest* received mixed reviews from my college students. Some loved it and thought it was very helpful. Others thought Witherington was hard to follow. While the book may not always be as clear as we might like, this is probably due to the immense difficulty involved in summarizing very complex positions in a
relatively short space. The wealth of information available in the book makes up for any lack of clarity. *The Jesus Quest* has an excellent bibliography, extensive indexes, and lengthy end-notes for more technical comments and observations. It would be a valuable reference work for librarians who do collection development in this area, or for those who field reference questions on religion.

**Quality - 4**  
**Acceptability - 5**

Dennis Ingolfsland  
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible  
Bryan College, Tennessee


William Watkins spends two hundred fifty pages of this hardbound book supporting his view that we’ve not turned into a nation of pure relativists, but that even a relativist has absolute beliefs about life. He feels relativism spread because of a foothold in the professors in the departments of English, religions, sociology and art in our colleges and universities. An extensive bibliography and index with end notes compliments this detailed look at our culture.

*The New Absolutes* is rich in analysis of religion, euthanasia, abortion, the definition of family, women’s rights, race, and being politically correct, yet offers us answers to our cultural erosion. Watkins explains how ten beliefs once held to be absolutely true are being replaced with ten new ones. For example: The Old Absolute: The institution of marriage is God-ordained and occurs between a man and a woman until death severs the bond. The New Absolute: Marriage is a human contract made between any two people, and either party can terminate it for any reason.

Of particular interest is a study he cites by Carle Zimmerman who identified forms of behavior (no-fault divorces, fewer children per family, inhibitions against adultery) gaining in prominence as individuals become more important that the traditional family. Evidence abounds that the family is the basis for a healthy culture, but our modern thinking of pluralism, tolerance, multi-culturalism, and relativism clouds the benefits of Godly living. Judeo-Christian values are belittled and attacked across the board.

Some of the sad statistics quoted involve the “born again” and “evangelicals” of the day who admit to having rejected absolute truth. In a survey cited, forty-two percent of evangelical Christians survey in 1994 voiced their rejection of absolute truth. He brings to light the misconception of the separation of church and state defining it as the Constitution framers intended. He cites numerous examples to support his views of how the “wall of separation” has “benefited” the exercise of religious liberty.

In conclusion Watkins feels as a society we need to become antagonistic rather than accommodating to the new absolutes, not by releasing hate, but by not tolerating evil disguised as truth. We should be defending the pre-born, newborn, disabled, ill, and elderly. He supports not bowing to intimidation tactics by those “caught up in moral stupidity and intellectual nonsense.”

**Quality - 4**  
**Acceptability - 5**

Carolyn Hearing  
Retired Teacher  
Virginia, Minnesota


Over the years Biblical scholarship has often made a distinction between the “historical Jesus” and the “Christ of Faith.” The historical Jesus was the person who really lived in Galilee two thousand years ago. The Christ of Faith is the risen Lord who walked on water, raised the dead and is worshipped in the Church. While evangelicals affirm that the historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith are one and the same, liberal scholars often deny that the historical Jesus was anything but an ordinary man.

Tom Wright’s book is about the “original Jesus.” As an evangelical, Dr. Wright would affirm the continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of Faith, but his book focuses not on the doctrinal or theological aspects of Jesus’ work, but on what we can know of Jesus from history. *The Original Jesus* was written in two parts. Part one is a version of a BBC television series hosted by Tom Wright and aired in Britain. In this section Dr. Wright describes the Jesus of history by using the Old and New Testaments, combined with insights from history, culture, and geography. The picture that emerges is not the “sweet Jesus” of the hymns, or the “gentle Jesus meek and mild” of the Sunday school classes; but rather a picture of a real person with real feelings and emotions who lived in a harsh and sometimes violent world. Part two, entitled “Reading the Gospels with both eyes open,” discusses the Gospels as historical sources. This part covers such issues as the problem of discrepancies, the phenomena of oral tradition, the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the date of the Gospels, and the different theological perspectives of the gospel writers.

*The Original Jesus* is not a full survey of Jesus’ life, but it is certainly a good introduction. It is not an apologetics book, but it does provide a good defense of the essential reliability of the gospel story. Wright’s book does not require the readers to assume evangelical presuppositions about the inspiration of the Bible before they can appreciate the force of the evidence for Jesus. The book is easy to understand, has a short annotated bibliography, and is lavishly illustrated with beautiful color pictures.

Tom Wright is one of the foremost evangelical Jesus scholars in the world today. He has taught at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, has written several books, and has lectured widely.

Although this is an excellent introductory book to the historical Jesus, I have rated it as 4 for acceptability. This is because Dr. Wright approaches the Gospels as one would approach any other ancient writings, not as inspired Scripture. Some evangelicals may not be comfortable with that approach.

**Quality - 5**  
**Acceptability - 4**

Dennis Ingolfsland  
Director of Library Services / Assistant Professor of Bible  
Bryan College, Tennessee


John Maxwell and Brad Lewis have written a family devotional book with fifty-two weekly topics such as commitment, failure, grace, gratitude, humility, spiritual dryness, and taming the tongue. Each chapter begins with a short, fun activity that leads into a discussion of the topic of the week. The discussion is followed by a memory verse, a Bible passage to read, and suggestions for family prayer. Except for a small amount of preparation needed for the opening activity—things as simple as purchasing some grapes or making sure you have vinegar and baking soda on hand—the book includes everything you need except a Bible. The plan is for families to set aside one hour a week for family devotions. The optional material provided offers suggestions for further prayer, Bible reading, and discussion related to the topic. A family would spend an hour together on Monday, and then a short follow-up time each day, Tuesday through Friday.

A major strength of this book is that the topics would interest older children and teenagers, and be equally challenging for adults. Although he uses quotations, there is no bibliography. Maxwell’s choice of topics is outstanding. The material is solid, biblical, and relevant. Using...
this book would be like inviting a wise and godly pastor into your home to lead your family devotions. He would gently prompt you to examine your lives in light of scripture. He would then lead you in prayers of confession, intercession, and thanksgiving.

Quality - 5  Acceptability - 5
Cathleen Sovold Johnson
Freelance Writer
Des Moines, Washington


Why is the attrition rate of new believers so high? Why doesn’t the gospel stick with some people? In *Follow Me*, Jan Hettinga explains the problem: “Somehow, we have mistakenly assumed that saving grace must be isolated from the call to follow, the call to enter into the kingdom of God, which is where followers of God live. We have become preoccupied with offering the gift, the pardon, the loving acceptance of God’s great salvation. We have forgotten that, according to Jesus, the arrival of the kingdom, the reign of God, is the gospel.” It’s not enough to accept Jesus as Savior; to truly live in Christ, you must surrender control of your life to God’s kingdom rule.

The book covers five areas. Part One explains why Jesus is a safe leader. Part Two describes the spiritually unsafe world we live in and various false or incomplete definitions that people give to sin. Hettinga focuses on the biblical definition of sin as rebellion against God. Part Three focuses on our need to repent and allow Christ to rule in our lives. Parts Four and Five discuss how we can surrender our lives to the kingdom and show what a kingdom community looks like. Each section ends with a list of study questions. Sprinkled in the book are also prayers of confession and surrender.

“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and others digested” (Francis Bacon). This book requires digestion. It isn’t a “feel good” Christian living book; it provokes thought and requires digestion. It isn’t a “feel good” book. Hettinga openly and humbly acknowledges the kingdom issues he still struggles with. To illustrate his points, he uses real-life anecdotes and several diagrams to depict the kingdom-of-self versus kingdom-of-God struggle. No one reading this book can come away without wrestling with the issues it raises. For it challenges some commonly held ideas about evangelism and discipleship. But these challenges are biblically based. This is a book that those serious about their Christian faith must reckon with.

This book inspired a new book line by NavPress called the Spiritual Foundation Line. This line will focus on helping readers become more Christlike in their daily lives.

Quality - 5  Acceptability - 5
Lorinda K. F. Newton
Freelance Writer
Editor, Northwest Christian Author
Kirkland, Washington


Adrian Rogers’ ten secrets for a successful family are the Ten Commandments. He asserts that parents who convey God’s Law to their children do not merely train them, but also form thriving relationships with them.

The Ten Commandments are undeniably the foundation of morality. God commands us in Deuteronomy 6:6,7 to teach them to our children. However, if the state of our society is any indication, parents are failing to carry out this command. Rogers discusses the consequences of neglecting the character education of our children. “A man who jumps out of a ten-story building doesn’t break the law of gravity. He merely demonstrates it. And when you transgress God’s Commandments, you are broken by them,” he says.

Rogers also shows how to convey these principles. He carefully examines each commandment in the context of both Old and New Testament scripture. He seeks out the spirit of the law, rather than the letter of it. At the end of each chapter is a section entitled Turning the Commandments into Commitments, giving practical suggestions for teaching the commandments to children ages 0-6, 7-12, and 13+. Every parent ought to discover Ten Secrets for a Successful Family.

Quality - 5  Acceptability - 5
Andrea R. Hueltenbeck
Freelance Writer
Tempe, Arizona

In the first chapter of *Kids in Danger*, psychiatrist Ross Campbell says, “The most prevalent cause of anger in children is the feeling in their hearts that they are not loved enough.” He lists examples of children’s misbehaviors which he claims are expressions of anger: a four-year-old soiling her pants; a boy picking on his younger siblings; a student not turning in assignments; a teenager using drugs. At first glance, his assessment seems a gross over-simplification of complex problems. However, as he shares case studies from his own practice, it is clear parents must train their children to express anger in appropriate ways, or it will manifest itself in deviant behavior. Sometimes parents think if they provide food, clothing, and shelter and tell them “I love you,” their kids will get the message. Campbell says it takes more than that to convey unconditional love. He identifies three critical elements—eye contact, physical contact, and focused attention—and explains how to employ them to give children a feeling of worth.

Campbell charts ways of expressing anger on an “anger ladder,” with inappropriate behaviors occupying the lowest rungs and progressively more mature expressions rising toward the top. Our job as parents is to take our kids up the anger ladder, moving them away from destructive behaviors toward positive ones. The lowest rung of the anger ladder is passive-aggressive behavior. Campbell devotes a whole chapter to this topic. Other low rungs contain verbal and physical abuse and destructive behaviors. Higher rungs hold reactions such as logical thinking and seeking a resolution.

In *Kids in Danger*, Campbell explains how to train children to handle anger, a gradual process begun in infancy and completed by the seventeenth birthday. He gives practical tools for accomplishing the training—reading together, talking together, being available, disciplining the child.

*Kids in Danger* is a valuable addition to every parent’s library.

Quality - 4  Acceptability - 5
A passage from Ms. Chall’s book nailed me where it hurts when she describes the rush of busy parents: “we brush aside our children’s requests to play games, read stories, or examine their building projects. How often do we hear ourselves saying, ‘I’m almost finished with this honey. I’ll be right there’? But we may lose the moment, never getting around to responding to a child’s request.” She continues, “make room for what counts (because) time has a way of running out for each of us.”

*Making God Real to Your Children* is chock-full of hands-on applications and insightful commentary on how Christian parents can make a difference in their children’s lives by listening to their children and doing things with them that interest them. The author makes the most of her eight chapters, discussing discipline, communication, “fun-days and Sundays” (togetherness), and an entire section devoted to parents practicing what we preach. Chall also comments on ten tough problems—issues such as friends, music, sexual abuse, drugs, and cults—subjects necessary to address, but perhaps too ambitious to tackle in a single book; her conclusions were a bit simplistic.

Special features include a worksheet for parents to fill in called “Understanding My Child,” and an arrangement of some fascinating information into two-column charts. One chart lists sixteen attributes of God and compares them with the godly parent: “GOD is LOVING. He offers unconditional love.” and across is “The GODLY PARENT LOVES each child for the person he or she is, not for the person the parent wishes him or her to be.” Another chart compares Old Testament and New Testament references to parenting, uniquely revealing God’s balance between Old Testament law and New Testament love. For example, the familiar Old Testament adage, “Use a stick on them. They won’t die.” (Proverbs 23:13, 14) is balanced by New Testament mercy, “Don’t keep scolding and nagging your children; discipline them with love, offering suggestions and godly advice.” (Ephesians 6:4).

Each chapter ends with three or four “Questions for Thoughts,” and footnotes mention additional titles for further reading. An appendix lists “Together Recipes,” activities parents can do with their children.

Ultimately, Chall clarifies that our goal as Christian parents is to help our children grow into “independent, thinking, confident adults who exhibit self-control and an enthusiasm for playing the game of life in a way that pleases God.”

◆ Quality - 4  ◆ Acceptability - 4

*With Our Own Eyes* is a first-person dramatic story of a Christian witness of his country should read this book. Mosley is respectful of governmental authority and loves his country, but he is also willing to present the facts and make a stand when he believes the government has made some wrong choices. He has made many trips to Central American countries and tells the stories of the carnage of war, the desolation of the poor, the persecution of Christians. Every Christian who is concerned about the Christian witness of his country should read this book. Mosley respects governmental authority and loves his country, but he is also willing to present the facts and make a stand when he believes the government has made some wrong choices. He has made many trips to Central American countries and tells the stories of the carnage of war, the desolation of the poor, the persecution of Christians. *With Our Own Eyes* is a first-person dramatic story of a Christian response to the wounds of war, racism, and oppression. In the words of one observer, “The 29th chapter of Acts is being written at Jubilee Partners.”

Reading this gripping account will change your life. I know that I will never again blindly, naively, accept the political statements coming out of Washington as to why our country should support this or that confrontation. Mosley illustrates how we can seek peaceful solutions to these conflicts and find humanitarian ways to lift people to a better way of life. He has built homes in Nicaragua, provided medical assistance in Honduras, assisted churches in El Salvador, offered encouragement in Guatemala; and he takes you there as you read these personal stories. Mosley shows us how we can be involved to carry out the ministry of Jesus, “to proclaim release for prisoners, to let the oppressed go free.”

There is an excellent appendix listing the chronology of the major events covered in the
book. There are no pictures, but with Mosley’s graphic descriptions, that is almost a relief.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Delores Scarbrough
College Registrar
Edmonds, Washington


Meet Him at the Manger by Stuart and Jill Briscoe, a husband/wife team, focuses on preparing the reader to remember the Christ Child, and not be distracted by the trivia that surrounds the Christmas season. As they alternate articles, Stuart tends to exhort, focusing mainly on scripture, giving lists of ideas and things to do. Jill, on the other hand, writes with a more personal touch, intertwining her own testimony into her articles. Readers will enjoy following Jill, at age fourteen, as she views the Alps at dawn seeing the “incredible display of God’s creative genius” and is moved to her first poetic efforts. Her testimony continues in various articles as she finds Christ in college, leaves England and all possessions behind, and as a mom learns how to give meaningful, but not costly gifts.

Throughout this book, both Jill and Stuart point to Christ as the real meaning of Christmas, the unique gift that God gave us, and how he desires our celebration to focus on worship and simplicity. Jill’s poetry catches the essence of the season. This beautiful book would make an excellent gift. Each page is gold lined and usable illustrations from churches just like ours. This book introduces the prescription for healing the desperate needs of America’s children and their splintering families: the amazing obligations and abundant opportunities with which God has equipped the church for engendering love’s transforming revolution. Thus encouraged, the reader and his church next face a disquieting, essential study of the problems and needs of today’s children. From this essential base grows an explanation of how to implement the healing prescription. Using Bible based, relevant principles, It Takes a Church introduces the healing power of the church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace.


In It Takes A Church Within a Village, authors H. B. London and Neil Wiseman have undertaken to put the Bible based church back into business as God’s chosen, nurturing, healing community for children and their families. Opening on an upbeat note, this book introduces the prescription for healing the desperate needs of America’s children and their splintering families: the amazing obligations and abundant opportunities with which God has equipped the church for engendering love’s transforming revolution. Thus encouraged, the reader and his church next face a disquieting, essential study of the problems and needs of today’s children. From this essential base grows an explanation of how to implement the healing prescription. Using Bible based, relevant principles, It Takes a Church introduces the healing power of the church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace to a decaying society. The God directed church working as a village to mediate God’s grace.

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Today the family as a unit as well as individuals within the family face a myriad of temptations, according to Tom L. Eisenman in his latest book, *Temptations Families Face*. In each of thirteen chapters filled with appropriate Scriptures and examples from his own family’s life, he presents conscientious explanation of temptations, practical suggestions for confronting and changing situations, encouragement for the reader, and thought-provoking questions for discussion.

Readers may find a description of their own lives in chapter one, where Eisenman paints a vivid picture of many families today—both parents working long hours, seeking material possessions and personal fulfillment in a rat-paced frenzy, and children over scheduled with activities. He points us back to what is valuable: giving children our time and affection instead of things; remembering that our self-esteem is not based on a career label or performance; and emphasizing giving rather than getting in all personal relationships.

Eisenman devotes a chapter to the importance of the fathering role, discussing the temptation men face to be away from home too much. Another chapter praises the high calling of motherhood in a time when moms wonder if that role is worthwhile. He encourages families to work together creatively to help each other (for example, single moms) enabling parents to spend more time with children. The author’s counseling background and deep understanding of human needs shows in his discussions about how men and women bring expectations to dialogue and fail to grasp messages hidden within spoken words. Sensitive, he addresses such topics as violence in communication, guilt messages, and manipulation techniques.

Other chapters deal with family leadership (an excellent explanation of the father as team leader in a balanced family); the temptation to step across others’ boundaries (a nutshell summary of Henry Cloud and John Townsend’s Boundaries); the influence of television in our lives (its deleterious effects and how to handle viewing responsibly); remembering to love (affirming and forgiving others); disciplining firmly with love (fostering biblical self-esteem...
and a relationship with Christ); and trusting God through hard times.

_Temptations Families Face_ does not read like a textbook. Eisenman shares personal struggles in disciplining his children and teenagers, heartaches suffered through times of miscarriage, infertility, and eventual adoption, and inspiring vignettes from the lives of friends. He writes in compassionate boldness with a heart for God and the spiritual health of families.

This book will serve well as a counseling tool, family handbook, or a small group study guide. (A temptation—to give it as a gift to newlyweds).

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

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

_Paperbound, $39.99. Adult._

_CREATED TO LEARN_ is written to bridge the gap between teachers in Christian ministry and secular educational theory. Beginning and ending with Jesus as the example of applied Christian Educational Psychology, each chapter guides the reader through the learning process using what Yount labels “The Discipler’s Model.” This schema, which applies learning theory to seven areas—the Bible, Needs, Thinking, Feeling, Relating, Growing in Christ, and the Holy Spirit—was developed as a result of observing Christian Education over an extended period of time and at various levels. The Model helps maximize the education of Christians by taking into account modern theories of learning and viewing them in light of Biblical truth.

As a textbook in educational psychology: _Created to Learn_ is conveniently arranged into fifteen chapters which fits easily into the semester schedule followed by most colleges and universities. Students will appreciate the wide-margin format which makes room for notes, as well as the section headings and important points highlighted therein. Each chapter has a wide range of easy-to-read charts and diagrams, and a variety of study aids which include key concepts, discussion questions, and a select bibliography for further reading. Both student and teacher will find this book useful.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Raymond Legg
Asst. Professor of English, Bryan College
Dayton, Tennessee


Attention Deficit Disorder is a name which can stir fear into the heart of any parent. So many questions, so many misunderstood beliefs, so few answers. That is, until a parent/educator reads this book. The author, Elaine McEwan herself has struggled with ADHD since she was a child. Who more fitted to truly empathize and encourage those currently dealing with this disorder? Better still, is McEwan’s professional background as a teacher, administrator, and parent.

Adults as well as children can be effected by Attention Deficit Disorder and this book provides the practical tools for gaining a more stable, healthy family life. Included in this book are chapters on understanding the disorder, how to know if your child has ADHD, treating ADHD, medications, public school helps, survival skills at home, supports for marriage and family life. McEwan also provides numerous appendixes chock full of insightful information and organizations to contact. She gives the reader a better handle on how to cope with this disorder with a positive, proactive attitude. McEwan even cites numerous true case studies and details their plan of action for living with ADHD. After reading Attention Deficit Disorder parents/educators will feel more confident having been given the necessary information and tools to begin managing those precious ones under their care with ADHD.

◆ Quality - 5  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Andrea R. Hueskenbeek
Freelance Writer
Tempe, Arizona


Four hundred and twenty-four pages brimming with information for the Christian writer is yours in _The Christian Writer’s Book_. The authors Don M. Aycock and Leonard G. Goss target those writers who are primarily interested in nonfiction religious book writing. A great deal of the information is also valuable to writers of other genres.

Their advice runs from the obvious, “If you are serious about writing, you must write,” to a whole chapter on deciphering the complicated convolutions of a publishing contract. Even published authors will find helpful tips and the struggling beginner shouldn’t be without this information. Not only does the book contain the opinions of Aycock and Goss, they quote liberally from major publishing house editors. Roland Sebald of Augsburg Fortress had this to say on writing nonfiction religious books: “Books which speak to the needs and aspirations of people will always have value. Books that help people solve problems, grow in faith, and see a new perspective in life need to be written in every generation to apply the old truths of medical personnel are valuable to anyone who loves a differently abled or seriously ill child.

Sullivan records several guideposts along each family’s journey: their reactions to the initial diagnosis (and the professionals who made them); phases of denial and grief; impact on the family unit; how the parents learned how to “work the system,” becoming their child’s advocate; dealing with the loss of personal identity; socialization; relationships with professionals; and sources of strength and hope. The parents candidly open their hearts, sometimes confessing attitudes of which they are not proud, but which other parents in the same situation would acknowledge as real. But best of all, in sharing their stories, they serve as role models for parents facing the same challenges. They demonstrate how to persevere for the sake of the child, how to search out better alternatives when what’s offered isn’t satisfactory.

Sullivan’s style reads like a transcript of a television interview. It’s sparked with banter between him and his subjects, and it’s occasionally circuitous and redundant. Spiritual issues are not addressed, except in passing, as when parents mentioned that their faith, or prayer, or a sense of God’s involvement got them through difficult times.

◆ Quality - 4  ❤ Acceptability - 5

Michele Howe
Freelance Writer and Homeschool Mother
LaSalle, Michigan


Tom Sullivan is well-known as a special correspondent for ABC’s _Good Morning America_, a sometime actor, and the author of his autobiography, _If You Could See What I Hear_. He is also blind.

Fascinated with his mother’s account of the challenges of raising a special-needs child, Sullivan interviewed 200 parents and selected six remarkable families of children with disabilities. _Special Parent, Special Child_ shares the stories of how these parents overcame their personal tragedies and became nurturers of and advocates for their children. The families dealt with diverse circumstances: cerebral palsy, blindness, leukemia, deafness, attention deficit disorder, and Down syndrome. The insights the parents offer about dealing with educational bureaucracies and
Scripture and the Christian tradition to the world in which we live.”

If you have a manuscript seeking a publisher, there are 130 pages of book markets. The information, under each publisher listed, tells the kind of manuscript that publisher is looking for, plus the submission format they prefer.

The authors have also included 83 pages of bibliography suggesting some of the better books on writing, editing, publishing, book production, research, and usage, for those who want more information than their book contains.


For centuries now, an intense academic debate has been raging over the question of the identity of the writer of Shakespeare’s plays. It may come as a surprise to the casual reader or student that the glove-maker’s son from Stratford-on-Avon is not universally accepted. In fact, many names have been linked to these great dramatic works.

In his book, Shakespeare: Who Was He?, Whalen introduces his reader to one Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. While Whalen is clearly convinced of the validity of his claim, he does attempt to preserve an objective stance when presenting his arguments. He begins with an examination of the evidence for and against Will Shakespeare, the man from Stratford, then moves on to a thorough discussion of the case for the Earl of Oxford. The author’s objectivity does break down occasionally. For example, more time is devoted to arguments against Shakespeare than to those rebutting the Oxford contender. Also, in the table of contents, Oxford is referred to as “The Leading Challenger,” an appellation some literary critics may query.

On the whole, the book demonstrates an exhaustive approach to research. It is well-organized and written in a very accessible style. The annotated bibliography and index provide useful aids for the serious researcher; the end notes, however, are lengthy and somewhat cumbersome. Occasionally, Whalen’s points are lost in a quagmire of detail. Concentrating on some of the primary issues might help to clarify the discussion. On the other hand, the author does state that, “Assessing the cumulative weight of the evidence is crucial. Any single argument by itself can be denied or dismissed on some basis.”

And so, the identity of Shakespeare remains a mystery. Researchers must continue to pepper their debates with phrases such as “it appears” and “it is possible.” But while no firm conclusions have been reached, it is safe to say that followers of the Bard of Avon had better not rest on their laurels; the case for Oxford is quite convincing.


Billy by Sherwood Wirt gives a unique view of Billy Graham through the eyes of a man who worked with Graham as the editor of Decision magazine. Written by a man with a unique, personal view of Billy Graham over the years, this biography is filled with stories that show the character of Billy Graham in a variety of circumstances during the many years of his public ministry.

Through the use of personal stories, the author gives a close-up look of Billy Graham in dozens of settings. He shows Billy as a genuine, down-to-earth individual as well as a man of great drive and tremendous energy and vision.

As the author follows Billy to crusades around the world, the reader is given a behind-the-scenes perspective. Woven throughout are details about the men who made up the Billy Graham team from its inception to the present.

Pictures appear throughout the book as well as excerpts of letters actually written to Billy. A few pages list “What people have said about Billy Graham.”

The glimpses that the author gives from his personal recollections give a over-all picture of the entire Billy Graham Evangelistic Association that are both informative and inspiring.


Clive Staples Lewis, nicknamed Jack throughout his life, embraced Christianity after years of atheism. He was a highly intelligent professor of English literature and a deep thinker. Only irrefutable evidence would convince him. Finally, at the age of thirty-three, he became convinced of the truth that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh who came to earth to be our Savior. Christ then became the center of both Lewis’ life and of his writings, many of which have become classics.

Not a Tame Lion: The Spiritual Legacy of C.S. Lewis is not merely a biography. Terry Glaspey gives insight into the man’s thoughts and writing themes as well as telling about his life and legacy. He writes as a devoted student of Lewis, whom he has come to know intimately through his writings. This book would be a wonderful introduction to the life and thought of C.S. Lewis.

Small in size with under 250 pages of easily read print, this book is likely to be picked up and read by average adults who may have previously considered Lewis’ writings for intellectuals only. The book is divided into His Life, His Thought, and His Legacy, with a page of chronological events in Lewis’ life, a complete list of his writings organized as to genre, a bibliography of writings about Lewis, and a list of C.S. Lewis’ Lessons of Leadership.

Glaspey, in his conversational style, gives the reader a sampling of each of the sixty or more writings of Lewis, and does this in such a way as to stimulate the desire to devour and absorb everything Lewis has written. Extensive endnotes document each quote or idea so the reader knows what book to read to satisfy the newly awakened interest.

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