

Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

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2007 Awards Issue
Newbery and Caldecott Speeches
Book Clubs for Teens • Tips for First-Year Managers

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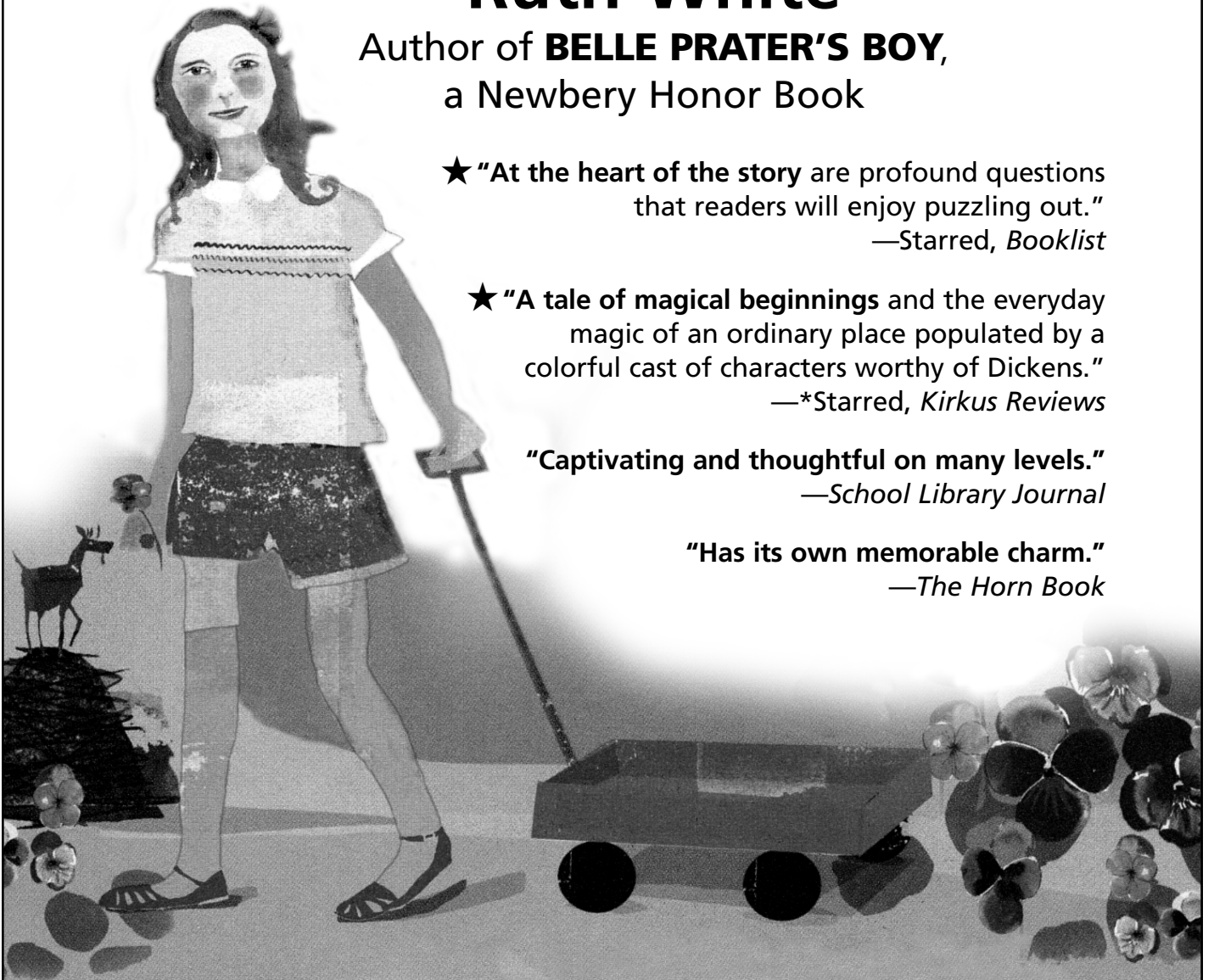
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Editor's Note

The Cat in the Hat Turns 50

Sharon Verbeten

With apologies to the late, great Theodor "Seuss" Geisel, I celebrate the golden anniversary of *The Cat in the Hat* with this poem:

The Cat in the Hat is "where it's at,"
We love it like this, we love it like that.
We'll read it in a house, we'll read it with a mouse,
We'll read it in a box, we'll read it with a fox
(*Oh, wait, that's another Dr. Seuss story,
full of pictures and rhymes in all their glory.*)
These days, Seuss's small blue tome
Can be found in almost every home.
This year, it celebrates a milestone—50 years.

In 1957, Dr. Seuss wrote a book
That would make adults take a new look
At literacy and why kids like to read—
A fun-filled, easy story was all they would need.
Using vocabulary words—only 236
It's a book that today almost every mom picks
To teach her little ones how to read;
It's one of the best books you'll ever need! 🐾



Executive Director's Note

Try to Remember . . .

Diane Foote

For those of us working in youth services, whether in a school or public setting, it feels like the new year begins in September, not January. Even while we look

ahead to what we'd like to accomplish this year, it's fun to remember what we did last summer, including enjoying ALA's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. This was a banner year for attendance (nearly 30,000 librarians descended on the nation's capital!), and most comments I've heard from attendees have been very positive.

In this issue of *Children and Libraries*, we're pleased to feature the Caldecott and Newbery Medal speeches as well as the 2007 May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture given by Caldecott medalist and Newbery honoree Kevin Henkes at the University of Kentucky in March. We've also provided a great deal of ideas for the upcoming year, including articles on large-group storytimes, a "Weird Science" Halloween party, metaphors for book award evaluation, how to make your library as welcoming as it can be, a fantasy book club for tweens, how to create a "Seuss-A-Thon," effective scheduling for families with two working parents, and a fun opportunity for programming, Jumpstart's "Read for the Record."

Happy reading! 🐾

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Outgoing President's ALSC Message

Kathleen T. Horning
ALSC President, 2006-2007

Ten Things I Learned about ALSC Members

It's traditional for the ALSC president to devote the final column to a review of the previous year's highlights. But you can read that in the president's annual report posted on the ALSC Web site, so instead I'd like to share with you the top ten things I've learned about ALSC members this past year.

1. **ALSC members are great communicators.** I received, on average, twenty e-mail messages a day from them. Many were from committee chairs and members copying me on messages related to committee business, and, while most of them did not require a reply from me, it was illuminating to see what was going on with our hard-working committees. I also received occasional messages from members expressing either their pleasure or displeasure with what I was doing. I received lots of helpful suggestions and advice from members, both in person and via e-mail. One of the first suggestions I received came from ALSC member Carrie Banks, and it led to our joint preconference with the Association

of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, "The Underserved Twenty Percent: Children, Teens, and Adults with Disabilities."

2. **ALSC members are involved.** We have fifty-six committees, and I was surprised how easy it was to find willing volunteers to fill each vacancy. The most hotly contested spots were for the three vacant positions on the Budget Committee. After I posted a job description for it on ALSC-L, twenty members volunteered. I only wish I had had time to write such a description for every ALSC committee. Each one has its own special character, due largely to the members who serve on it.
3. **ALSC members are energetic.** Take, for example, Bessie Condos, chair of the Legislation Committee. On relatively short notice, she and her small subcommittee, comprised of Thom Barthelmess, Penny Markey, Kathy Toon, and Gretchen Wronka, stepped up to put together a proposal in response to the ALA Washington Office's invitation to divisions to compete for display space for Tuesday on the Hill at ALA's 2007 Annual Conference. Due to the strength of their proposal, ALSC was one of the divisions accepted, which means that ALSC—and by extension, youth services librarians—was visible to members of Congress who stopped by the displays.
4. **ALSC members are creative.** You see examples of this with ideas shared on our electronic discussion lists, our publications, and at our conferences. At the ALSC National Institute in Pittsburgh last fall, for example, we had an opportunity to hear from several members who described the innovative programming they did to celebrate El día de los niños/El día de los libros in their communities. No two programs were alike, and yet they all partnered with outside organizations and local businesses to honor diversity and bring children and their families together with books.

Kathleen T. Horning is Director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center, a library of the UW-Madison School of Education.

continued on page 5



Incoming President's ALSC Message

Jane B. Marino
ALSC President, 2007-2008

It's amazing when you have a lightbulb moment—those wonderful, revealing moments when you remember why you do your job.

It happened recently when I had the honor of representing ALSC at the thirteenth annual Reading Rainbow Young Writers and Illustrators contest. Young writers from kindergarten through third grade competed first on a local level and then on a national level for grand prize, second place, and third place in each grade category. As part of a panel of publishers, educators, a children's author, and a librarian, I read forty to fifty essays that were moving, compelling, funny, or educational. They were all illustrated by the young authors, and the illustrations used every medium possible, from photographs to collage, from three-dimensional to paintings.

In each category, there were two or three that were so close, it was hard to decide. That's when the group decided to read those essays aloud. As the librarian in the group, I was elected. Afterward, as we discussed them further, the members of the group made comments that said, essentially, listening to the stories being read out loud really made them come

alive for the group and made it easier for us all to decide.

That's when I had my moment: That's what I do as a librarian—it's what we all do. We sell books. We read them out loud; we booktalk them; we review them; we discuss them; we select them for awards; we argue about them; we even cause a controversy or two about them. But mainly we sell them.

We convince untold numbers of children and parents that a particular book is the one they should bring home. We demonstrate to young parents how to read out loud to their children. We gather elementary, middle, and high school children into book discussion groups to discuss a particular book they've read that month. We hold summer reading programs, during which many voracious readers devour as many books as they can, and, if we're lucky, we get a reluctant reader turned on to one book that will lead him down the path to many more books and eventually a life of reading. It's what we do—it's our mission.

As ALSC members, we can draw on so many resources to help us in that mission. Born to Read, an ALSC project, builds partnerships between librarians and health care providers to reach out to new and expectant parents and help them raise children who are born to read.

Every Child Ready to Read @ your library® is an early literacy initiative to prepare librarians to help children start school ready to learn. ALSC and PLA have incorporated the latest research in early literacy and brain development into a series of parent and caregiver workshops to provide libraries with vital tools to help prepare parents for their critical role as their child's first teacher.

ALSC's Kids! @ your library® campaign initiative builds on the Campaign for America's Libraries, the multiyear public awareness and advocacy campaign sponsored by ALA. Kids! @ your library® provides promotion tips, sample press materials, downloadable art, and other tools to help local libraries reach out to kids, their parents, and caregivers.

Jane B. Marino is Director of the Bronxville (N.Y.) Public Library. She can be reached at (914) 337-7680 or jbmarino@optonline.net.

El día de los niños/El día de los libros is a celebration, held annually on April 30, that emphasizes the importance of advocating literacy for every child regardless of linguistic and cultural background. Through a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, ALSC continues to increase public awareness of this event in libraries

throughout the country. ALSC continues to collaborate on this effort with the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA).

For ALA's National Conference in 2008, in Anaheim, California, ALSC is planning its

preconference on summer reading. It will be a day jam-packed with ideas to bring home, programs to use, and authors and illustrators to inspire you. As ALSC members, we are all working on this mission—to sell books to kids. It's a mission that takes an entire membership. ☺

OUTGOING ALSC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued from page 3

5. **ALSC members are enthusiastic.** If you've ever met Stephanie Bange, you know what I mean. Perhaps you've had an opportunity to hear her speak about the Kids! @ your library® Campaign. Stephanie chaired the ALSC task force that planned the national campaign, which launched to the media and general public last fall with a performance by Bill Harley of a song he wrote especially for the campaign. It's a very catchy tune, and I think of Stephanie and her Kids! @ your library® Task Force every time I hear it.

6. **ALSC members are generous,** and not just with their contributions to Friends of ALSC. They are generous with their time and talents. In the past year, I've always found members eager to help out. One amazing example of this stands out to me—Effie Lee Morris offered to contact her personal friend, Marian Wright Edelman, to encourage her to accept our invitation to serve as the speaker on the ALSC President's Program. Her generous spirit made it possible for ALA members to hear directly from one of our nation's true visionaries.

7. **ALSC members are on the cutting edge.** OK, I confess that I wasn't sure what a wiki was when I started this job. I'm sure now, though, thanks to the Children and Technology Committee's excellent ChildTech

wiki. Their wiki is such a great model that I asked chair Teresa Walls to talk about it with other committee chairs at the Division Leadership Meeting at ALA's Midwinter Meeting. Thanks to her inspiration and ALSC office support from Aimee Strittmatter and Laura Schulte-Cooper, a dozen more committees had created their own wiki pages by Annual Conference.

8. **ALSC members are forward-thinking.** Years ago, the Oral History Committee conducted interviews with prominent leaders in our field, including many past presidents. This year, the tapes were finally professionally transcribed, due to a proposal submitted by the current Oral History Committee, and I had an opportunity to read some of them during my presidential year. I love history, so I greatly enjoyed all the anecdotes. But what truly stood out to me was how many of our leaders talked not about the past, but about the future. Perhaps it's because we work with children that we're always thinking about how the future will look.

9. **ALSC members are leaders.** Throughout the year, I've been impressed by our competent and dedicated committee chairs as well as by members who are ready to take on leadership roles. I know there is a great concern about the graying of our profession and that we must

continue to look for new and innovative ways to bring young people into our field. ALSC board member Rose Treviño has been doing groundbreaking work in this area, using grant money to allow new children's librarians from diverse backgrounds to join ALA and attend conferences. If Rose's program could be replicated in even ten other cities, it would be a huge step in the right direction.

10. **ALSC members still want to learn.** When the Education Committee sent continuing education surveys out to our membership this spring, nearly one thousand of you responded. The remarkable return rate reflects the great interest you have in continuing to learn about the profession. When asked what the top reason was for wanting continuing education opportunities, nearly 90 percent cited "personal and professional growth." To my mind, this is the sign of a healthy profession, when its members recognize the importance of sharpening their existing skills and learning new skills as well.

I've learned a lot in the past year, not just *about* ALSC members but *from* ALSC members as well. Although my presidential year has come to an end, I look forward to learning more from you all in the future. ☺

Newbery Medal Acceptance Speech

The Bathtub Storyteller

Susan Patron



Susan Patron is the winner of the 2007 Newbery Medal for *The Higher Power of Lucky*, published by Richard Jackson Books/Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Her acceptance speech was delivered at the Annual Conference of the American Library Association in Washington, D.C., on June 24, 2007.

When my sister Georgia assured me that I really didn't need to recount my entire life history in this speech, I was relieved, as I'm sure you are, too. But I should touch on some highlights that led me to write the book I am so honored you are honoring.

My older sister Patricia hacked a path through the dense, impenetrable underbrush of childhood, so my own way was greatly eased as long as I stayed close behind her on the trail. My skirmishes off to the sides brought trouble. Patricia had a quality of empathy and generosity in childhood and adolescence that has become legendary in adulthood. She taught me how to read, for instance, when she was six and I was a four-year-old yearning to know the words that explained the pictures in the *Los Angeles Times* comics page.

On the first day of instruction, she made me find the word "a" each time it appeared in every strip. I already knew "A" was a letter, the first letter, but I hadn't figured out it was also a word.

On day two, I was told to find every "the." So far, reading was easy, and I knew two different important words on sight. This went on for a while, and I remembered thinking I would be old, like around six, before I learned each word in the English language, one by one. But somehow eventually I was just reading, as Patricia had told me I would.

As we grew up, she continued to give me important life skills: she taught me, for example, the all-but-impossible skill of not caring if you were cool in junior high, and she taught me to play chess.

I was, and am, a crazed collector of objects most people throw away. I'm drawn to the idea of amassing a huge quantity of some unlikely thing, as prison inmates of the 1920s and 1930s did, making beautiful, functional lamps out of Popsicle sticks and fashioning picture frames and purses out of intricately folded, gluelessly connected cigarette packages.

Sometimes my collecting is seriously misguided, as in the 1990s, when I hoarded fabric-covered, foam-stuffed

shoulder pads with the intention of sewing them into a quilt. The fact that by its nature a shoulder pad will not lie flat and is defined by rounded borders did not deter me.

Writers present may recognize here the sick and insidious signs of writer's block. Patricia saved me from wasting hours of time on this project. "The foam inside will deteriorate," she said in a way that made me pay attention. "It'll be an awful quilt and you will hate it." This was how she told me to get back to writing. I am still grateful.

I began making up stories in third grade to entertain my then-four-year-old sister Georgia. My job was to give her a bath. The rule was that she couldn't get out of the tub until she was clean, which I determined by the degree of wrinkledness of her fingertips. Patient waiting on both our parts was required, so I sat on the lid of the toilet, inventing stories to pass the time. She sat unmoving in the tepid water, sucking a corner of the washcloth, forgetting, perhaps deliberately, to keep her hands in the water so they'd wrinkle. I loved to watch her eyes turn inward as she immersed herself in the story. Mesmerizing this little-sister listener, then and now a first audience for a new story, became a powerful stimulant and reward for me. (Georgia reported this experience to Richard Jackson at an ALA Conference; he urged me to write about it, and then published the result at Orchard as a chapter book called *Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe*.)

During the ten years it took me to write *The Higher Power of Lucky*, Georgia often told me she needed a new story from me, even offering to get in the bathtub (metaphorically, of course) if I needed her to.

Another lifeline during the long period of doomed attempts and writer's block was the faith of my editor, Richard Jackson. Dick doesn't measure time in the usual way. His form of encouragement is to make it known that he will wait as long as it takes. He is kind. He is ferociously protective of his authors. Compliments are rare from Dick Jackson because the shining force of his faith in the work, the great gift of that faith, constitutes

the true compliment and requires no further embellishment.

Wanting to become a writer from the time of the bathtub stories, I constructed elaborate romantic fantasies of my adult writer persona. In junior high and high school, I studied French for the sole purpose of assuming a French identity when I finished school and would be living in the maid's room on the top floor of an apartment in Paris. There I would write novels anonymously, so as not to get in trouble with my parents, that probed and clarified all aspects of the human soul. I would live on wine, coffee, and baguettes, wear white lipstick, and suffer willingly for my art. Three years of Mr. Gottlieb for French at Hollywood High School reinforced this notion: he played Edith Piaf records to give us an authentic flavor of the language. I would be tragic, like Piaf, only taller.

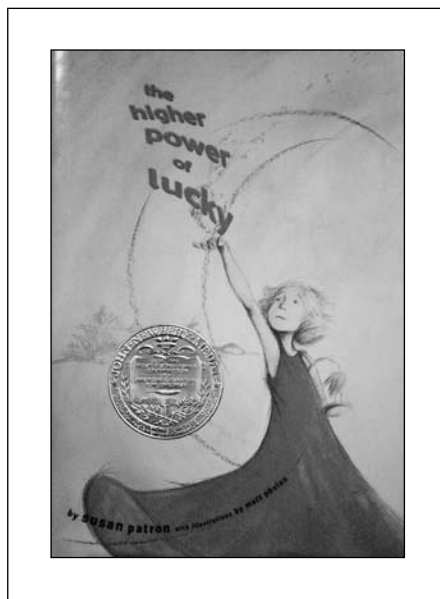
Coincidentally, at about this time, when I was sixteen, a young Frenchman came to Los Angeles for an extended visit, staying with my sister Patricia and her then-husband. One evening they were to attend a Ravi Shankar concert with some other friends, and Pat had asked me to babysit her two-year-old. When I arrived, there was a fire in the fireplace, lighting the rich wood paneling and Oriental rugs; Erik Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies* was playing on the turntable. The shy foreign guest, whose name was René Patron, wore a three-piece suit, looked like an actor in a François Truffaut movie, and smelled interesting and very French.

I was horrified and embarrassed not to be grown up yet, which didn't seem fair because I'd been working at it all my life. It was unbearable to be the babysitter, outside of the sophisticated, intellectual group who were all in their twenties, or at least nineteen. As everyone was leaving, my sister and René had a murmured conversation in French, which I tried mightily (but failed) to overhear and understand. Patricia shrugged and turned to me. "René's not going to the concert," she said. "He'd rather stay home with the babysitter."

Finding ourselves alone (with my niece tucked away in bed), neither of us able to converse in the other's language, we

sipped wine by the fire, and I studied the Erik Satie album jacket intently, as though there would be an exam on it later. It felt as if we were suspended in time. So we did the one thing we could do to connect in a nonverbal but thrilling way. I am sure you have guessed what that was because you remember that Patricia had long before taught me all the life skills. We played chess. He won, but only because I wasn't feeling competitive.

Some time after this, René rented a room from my mom's best friend, Helen Trimble, who lived across the street. He had brought only a small suitcase, not much bigger than a laptop. Helen Trimble became his surrogate American mother.



Her son, Jimmy, took René on his motorcycle to Pink's, Barney's Beanery, and the best jazz dives in L.A.

Several years later, after René and I were married, I'd become a children's librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library [LAPL], and he had established his rare book restoration business. Jimmy Trimble began imploring us to visit his cabin in a hard-scrabble town in the high desert of the Eastern Sierras. René was for it; I, not. For one thing, Jimmy was a larger-than-life kind of guy, a handsome, romantic outlaw, third-generation Irish; and who knew what kind of wild adventure he would launch us into? For another, the tiny town he described sounded

strange, excessively remote, depressed, and depressing. The idea of going there frightened me.

Then it was discovered that I had a serious illness, and mortality got up into my face, clamped my head in its vise, and blew its cold breath into my mouth. This changed me. When it was over, I was twenty-seven years old and had not died, which filled me with gratitude, recklessness, and the urge to experience everything. On our next vacation we crammed the trunk of the car with what I imagined were desert-survival necessities and went to visit Jimmy Trimble at a place similar to the fictional Hard Pan.

We were entranced by the landscapes and the exotic inhabitants—human, animal, and plant. Eventually the region became the first "character" in *The Higher Power of Lucky*. Jimmy Trimble played hard and died in his forties, and I gave his name, and his mother Helen's, to Lucky.

Lucky and I have had a pretty exciting ride, beginning with my prepublication realization that illustrations had not been discussed, yet to me they were important for a nine- or ten-year-old's understanding of some of the book's particular details, such as cholla burrs and parsley grinders.

An illustrator hadn't been budgeted and it was late, but Dick Jackson is an editor who listens to cries from the heart. He pulled out all the stops, asking me if I had someone in mind, and I leapt at the chance to suggest an artist whose only work I'd seen was a jacket reproduced in a Simon & Schuster catalog. It was a line drawing of a boy, sweet and vulnerable, surrounded by white space. That tiny picture was filled with emotion. The artist was Matt Phelan, who agreed to illustrate *Lucky*. To Matt, I give profound thanks for expanding access to the story through his thoughtful, tender, and delicate pictures.

The next part of the story of *Lucky* involved my waiting for some stranger's fingertips to wrinkle and eyes to turn inward, thrilled from being immersed in the book. Advance reader copies were sent to reviewers and given away at the ALA Conference a year ago. I waited eagerly for reviews. Being in collection

development, I knew where to check—databases, Web sites, blogs, print media. Fuse #8 published the first review on her blog. With publication in November, I figured there would be more response. In fact, there was very little, except a beautiful star in *Kirkus*, a light in the darkness. By December, a few lukewarm reviews. Best-of-the-year lists came out; *Lucky* appeared only on NYPLs. Mock Newbery award contests were held, but *The Higher Power of Lucky* wasn't selected as a contender for children to read.

By the third week in January, people close to me knew I was seriously and

But neither intellectual freedom and related issues nor shock value was in my mind at the time of writing. What I wanted was to tell a story that would be compelling to kids.

uncharacteristically depressed. On the Sunday before the day of the Newbery announcement, I thought hard about the children's literature community's reception of this book that, in Katherine Paterson's phrase, I'd given myself to. Then I played computer solitaire for three or maybe four hours straight. René checked on me periodically, pretending to adjust the Venetian blinds. "André Gide only sold twelve copies of his first book," he mentioned, almost casually.

Eleven years earlier, *Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe* had received starred reviews, was selected as an ALA Notable Book, and appeared on several best-of-the-year lists. I thought I had grown since then as a writer, and that *Lucky* was a deeper, richer book. I'd learned a lot and worked hard on getting better at the craft. It seemed I'd instead become a whole lot worse as a writer. "I'm going to give back the advance for *Lincoln's Knot*," I told René, referring to the companion book that I'd almost completed and that was, with Dick Jackson's retirement, to be in the hands of the brilliant Ginee Seo at Atheneum.

To paraphrase Donald Westlake, I'd decided to take myself out of the game and warm the bench of despair.

Having given up my writing career on Sunday night, I woke up Monday not as an author but as a librarian. My writer persona had thrown in the towel, but my LAPL juvenile materials collection development manager side was filled with excitement and anticipation and looked forward to going to work to hear the podcast of the award announcements live from Seattle.

When the phone rang at 6:30 A.M., I assumed it was a colleague; something to do with work. The person calling said she was Jeri Kladder, chair of the Newbery committee. OK, I thought, but why call

me? Maybe they needed some last-minute bibliographic information and had heard what a hotshot I was in those matters. She said I'd won the Newbery Award. This struck me as very weird and probably a mistake.

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Maybe you mean a Newbery Honor?" I heard a bunch of people in the background laughing—I was on speakerphone.

"Did we wake you?" asked Jeri Kladder. Synapses in my brain were sparking and snapping but not connecting. "No, I got up early to watch the podcast," I explained conversationally; just a little chat between colleagues.

I had made a chicken sandwich to take to work, and Gandalf, our 130-pound Rhodesian Ridgeback, was waiting impatiently for his rightful piece of chicken skin. He was agitating for it. Dogs are the most ritualistic species on earth, and if you gave yours a piece of chicken skin in 2002 when you made yourself a sandwich from last night's roast, that dog will expect, and lobby heavily and relentlessly for, his piece of chicken skin forever afterward.

The people in the background on the phone were cheering as Gandalf and I

danced around the kitchen. Jeri told me not to tell anyone until after the podcast at 8 A.M. That made me remember when the Caldecott and the Laura Ingalls Wilder committees I'd been on years before called our award recipients. You love your winner and you have worked very hard, and very honorably, to arrive at your decision.

So I cried and said, like someone on *The Sopranos*, because I was now in a completely surreal world, "I love you guys," something I would probably not say to a group of fifteen strangers in real life, and hung up. Then I gave Gandalf his piece of skin and went upstairs to tell René that I was going to be a writer again.

Jeri Kladder and the 2007 Newbery committee, I thank you deeply.

Then the story of the book gets a little bizarre. When some school librarians discovered that the first page contains the word "scrotum," an enormous national discussion ensued. Blogs and Web sites asked, "Shall we buy this book? What if parents object?"

Publishers Weekly interviewed me and ran a piece on the controversy, followed by a front-page article in *The New York Times*, in which I said that the word "scrotum" is delicious. I meant: the sound of it! To *Lucky*! This didn't help things. Then there were interviews on *Talk of the Nation* and other FM stations; Barbara Walters defended the book; and Roger Sutton of the *Horn Book* pointed out the insidious dangers of a subtle form of censorship that involves simply not buying a book that has won a major award.

I was trying to keep a copy of everything being said, published, blogged, and podcast about the controversy. In a librarian-esque way, I set up a folder: SCROTUM. Soon that folder was inadequate. I needed subheadings such as popular culture for online scrotum-inspired products: T-shirts, mouse pads, coffee cups, tote bags, and thongs. Subheading wikipedia, where *The Higher Power of Lucky* has the dubious distinction of being referenced in the entry under "scrotum." Subheading nasty e-mails. Subheading endorsements from organizations and colleagues. This included

online support from PEN, SCBWI, ALSC, the National Coalition against Censorship, and a beautiful affirmative statement posted on the Web sites of my distinguished co-honorees Jennifer Holm, Kirby Larson, and Cynthia Lord.

All this was, by turns, disturbing, ominous, reassuring, and exciting in its own strange way, but I began to long for someone, a child, to read past the first page. For weeks, the discussion went on and adults talked passionately about it. In France, our Patron relatives Googled their American aunt and found more discussions on French-language *blogues*. Finally, a teacher from Oakland wrote that her fourth-grade class, to whom she had read the book, could not guess what the controversy was about, though they thought it might be because I'd introduced the idea of cremation. When she told them it was over the word, they went to the dictionary and looked it up. They concluded that if the book were banned because of that word, then the dictionary should be banned, too.

And then a letter came from a young reader, which I'll share with you:

Dear Susan. My name is Leah. I am eight years old—I live in Creston Iowa. I read your Book Higher Power of Lucky. I really enjoyed it. Here are some things that I enjoyed. Lucky was brave to get that bug out of her ear. It was great that she found her higher power. I liked how Brigget spoke French. Oh, La vache! [smiley face drawing] I liked when Brigget adopted Lucky, just like when my mom adopted me. Also I liked how the numbers are on the side of the pages. Love, Leah.

PS tell me when you write another book.

That's a promise, Leah.

The question every reporter asked was, "If you were to write the book again, would you use a different word?" Would another word, or another body part, have done? Did I throw that scrotum in gratuitously for shock value?

My answer is that I chose the word very carefully and deliberately. But neither intellectual freedom and related issues nor shock value was in my mind at the time of writing. What I wanted was to tell a story that would be compelling to kids. I was interested in relating to readers on a deeply emotional level, in a way that

I am more than ever confirmed in my belief that librarianship is a noble profession, essential to free speech and free access for children.

could help them figure out a little about how the world works.

I needed a sensitive word and subject, something a little bit taboo, in order for one of the final scenes to have impact and power. In that scene, enough trust has been engendered between Lucky and her guardian, Brigitte, that now, at last, Lucky can ask her question straightforwardly. It's very significant that Lucky finally has enough trust that she can go to Brigitte with her questions, because she is trying hard, throughout the book, to prepare herself for growing up. Lucky is teetering on the brink of womanhood, and she swipes Brigitte's red silk dress as a metaphor of this.

Brigitte's answer, explaining the meaning of scrotum, is equally important. It shows Lucky, and the reader, that Brigitte deeply loves her ward. If the question had

been less intimate, the scene wouldn't have had the same impact.

Many thanks to my agent Susan Cohen of Writers House, and to everyone at Simon & Schuster/Atheneum for supporting *The Higher Power of Lucky*, especially Emma Dryden, Rubin Pfeffer, Rick Richter, Ann Bobco, Ginee Seo, Paul Crichton, Michelle Fadlalla, Lila Haber, Carol Chou, Mary McAveney, Mara Anastas, Jodie Cohen, Kim Lauber, and Richard Jackson.

Thanks to all my LAPL buds, Eva Cox in particular.

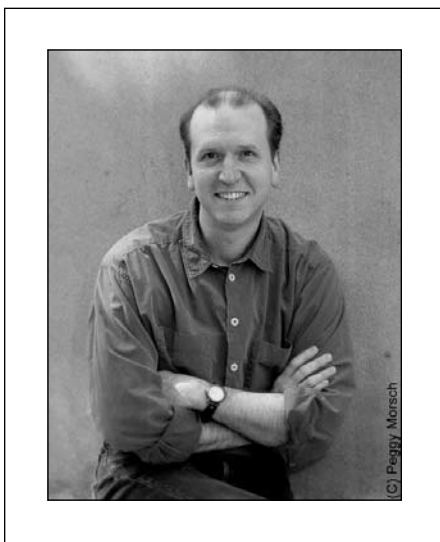
With the firestorm and controversy out of which *The Higher Power of Lucky* has emerged unscathed, I am more than ever confirmed in my belief that librarianship is a noble profession, essential to free speech and free access for children. It is crucial to children's ability to make sense of this fragile, battered world—the world we're handing over to them. I'm grateful to have spent thirty-five years promoting children's books. It's work you can look back on and know you made a difference in people's lives, and as clichéd as that sounds, I believe it profoundly.

To teachers and librarians who take risks using books that may occasion objections or challenges, bravo. To publishers and editors who stand behind authors as they work to make a story true to its characters, and as they try to write in a way that respects the intelligence of readers, bravo. Bravo and thank you. 🍷

Caldecott Medal Acceptance Speech

Of Flotsam, Jetsam, and Another Caldecott

David Wiesner



David Wiesner is the winner of the 2007 Caldecott Medal for Flotsam, published by Clarion Books. His acceptance speech was delivered at the Annual Conference of the American Library Association in Washington, D.C., on June 24, 2007.

*Got some flotsam?
Yeah, I've got some.
Got some jetsam?
No, but I can get some.*

When I was in the fourth grade, my teacher read a poem by Ogden Nash to the class. I've never forgotten it. From that point on, the words *flotsam* and *jetsam* were part of my vocabulary. They were funny-sounding and interesting in meaning. While *flotsam* technically refers specifically to maritime debris, I like the more colloquial definition referring to odds and ends that can turn up anywhere—on the beach, on land, even in your mind.

Flotsam on a cosmic scale—images, ideas, and memories floating through time and space—appeals to me now.

As a kid, though, I only knew the down-to-earth kind. The most remarkable piece of flotsam I ever found was buried in a brook that ran through the woods at one end of my neighborhood. The woods seemed huge back then, but they were really just an undeveloped acre of land. It was an exciting and mysterious place to play, and, despite repeated severe cases of poison ivy, I couldn't keep away.

One day when I was eight or nine years old, my friend Brian Wilbur and I were digging around in the brook, as we often did. We were probably trying to build a dam, one of our favorite activities. We were soaked. Suddenly, we saw something poking out of the mud under the water. It appeared to be a face. And a leg. And they weren't human.

I dug my hand into the mud and pulled the object out—it was very heavy—and rinsed it off in the flowing water. It was a black metal figure of a bull, about six inches long. At one time it had had ivory horns, but they had been broken off and only stumps remained. Its posture was wonderfully contorted, with the head lowered and twisting to look up. The face was an intense grimace, and the features and musculature were rendered in minute detail.

We were stunned. This wasn't a toy. It was a grown-up thing. How could it have

gotten here, in our brook, in our woods? I was fascinated by the idea that this object had a whole unknown history. I'm sure that my imaginings were far more exotic than reality—but who knows?

I kept that bull on my drawing table for years, right up until 1983, when the apartment building my wife, Kim, and I were living in burned down and took everything we owned with it. Fortunately, we didn't have much at the time. There were a few very hard losses, like Kim's cello and my college sketchbooks. But in the days after the fire, as I mentally went over the contents of the apartment, I can recall the pang I felt when I realized that the bull was gone. It was like losing a little piece of my childhood.

After a long time, my friend Brian and I got together. We hadn't seen each other for at least twenty years, but it took him less than five minutes to ask, "Do you still have that bull we found in the brook?" I was amazed! He hadn't seen this thing since he was a kid, and yet it was still lodged in his mind as firmly as it had been in mine. It was maybe even more remarkable because he hadn't set eyes on the object in nearly thirty years, since I was the one who kept the bull after we found it. How did that come about? Well, it's funny, but my memory gets a little hazy about this part of the story. There seemed to be some dispute over who really discovered it. Let's just say that at the time I was a year older and a lot bigger than he was.

Anyway, Brian proposed that since I had had it all that time, maybe he could have a turn keeping it. Which would have been a great ending to this story, except that I had to tell him about the fire. We were both pretty bummed about losing the bull, but we liked the idea that it was out there somewhere. Maybe it had fallen off the dumpster as the building debris was being carted away. Maybe it was poking through the ground in a landfill that was being developed. And maybe, hopefully, another kid found it.

As a story idea, a kid stumbling across something extraordinary, something with secrets to reveal, had been floating around my mind for some time when I started working on this book. I am not

consciously aware that my childhood flotsam story played a part in this, but I think it had to have been some kind of motivation. Visually, though, this story about finding something has always taken place on the beach. Or, as we say in New Jersey, down the shore.

From before I was born until I was fourteen, my family spent the last two weeks of August on Long Beach Island, New Jersey. Squeezed into the back of our station wagon, I always felt that the trip there took days.

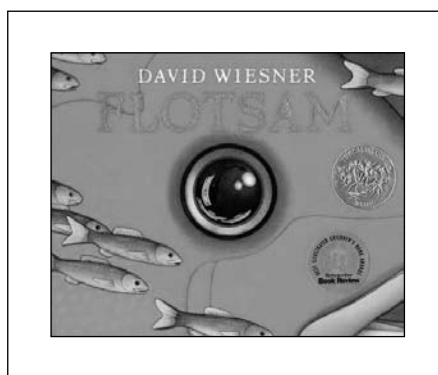
Crossing the causeway to get to the island was like arriving in another world. When we got to the house, I would immediately run down to the beach. Coming up over the crest of the sand dune and experiencing the sight and smell and sound of the ocean was always overwhelming to my senses. The island seemed to me like an enchanted land. It was a shock to learn that people actually lived there year-round. I saw evidence of that enchantment in the permanent residents from whom we rented a house—the Segals. As a kid, I thought, Wow, they live at the beach and they're named the Seagulls!

Sometimes the ocean water would collect in a tide pool high up on the beach. One day I saw a group of people gathered around, pointing at something. I approached and saw a fish trapped in the pool. Actually, I wasn't really sure if it was a fish at all. It was yellow with black spots. It was blown up round, like a balloon. It was covered with spikes. It had a beak. It looked like an alien! It elicited from me the simultaneous reactions of "Ewww!" and "Cooool!" And then I realized that this thing, this puffer fish, had been out there in the water where I had just been swimming. So, there might be more of them. And there might be . . . well, who knew what else might be out there?

After I won a second Caldecott, for *The Three Pigs*, people kept saying such helpful things as, "Gee, how are you going to top that?" Hmm. I hadn't been thinking about topping anything. Maybe, I thought, it would be a good idea to step out of the limelight for a bit. I began to think that I should do a smaller-scaled, quieter book. And, for a change of pace, one with a text. My previous two books

were forty-eight and forty pages and had taken ages to complete. I was determined not to go over thirty-two pages this time, and I wasn't going to let three or four years go by between books again. So, five years later, I came out with a wordless, forty-page book.

The creative process can be such a pain in the neck. It's not like I didn't really try to make that quieter thirty-two-page book with a text. I was concurrently working on three different story ideas. The first, which is the one my contract was for, was about aliens landing in a backyard. It had a great beginning, but nothing as good to follow it. The second idea was about fish living in a house. It had lots and lots of great imagery, but no plot to speak of.



The third idea was *Flotsam*. I knew from the start that *Flotsam* would be the title of whatever my kid-on-the-beach story turned out to be. At first I had no idea what the kid would find. I started by making it a small crystalline sphere. How this object would reveal any hidden secrets, I had no idea. It was really just a placeholder until I figured out what that object actually was.

In its first incarnation, the story spanned from the dawn of time to the present. It then developed two parallel story lines with two different, tightly formatted design layouts that would merge at the end—a visual device that I really liked. Eventually, I decided that a camera would be a great way to show the secrets beneath the waves. In one version it was a talking camera. I then introduced a text. My main character was a girl. For a time the story was about sibling rivalry. For a long time the story focused

too closely on the journey the camera made. At some point my main character became a boy.

All the elements of a story seemed to be scattered throughout the many book dummies that I had made, but I hadn't yet had the "Aha" moment. The story was pushing in new directions, but I was still clinging to a strict design template that wouldn't let the pictures evolve as well. I realized that I had to put aside all my preconceptions and start over. This time I should just tell the kid's story.

The pictures flowed out, the text disappeared, and the parallel stories became one.

As I was working my way through the fantastical undersea photos that the camera would reveal, the final piece of the story fell into place. The camera had shown octopi reading in a makeshift living room, sea turtles with cities on their backs, a puffer fish hot-air balloon, starfish islands, and aliens on vacation. I needed one more extraordinary photo, and suddenly, surprisingly, I saw it—an image of another kid looking directly out at the viewer. And that kid in the photo was holding a photo of another kid, who was holding a photo of another kid, who was holding a photo of another kid, back through all the kids who had had the camera before, finally reaching the child who had started it all.

Aha! At last, this was what my character was meant to find on the beach—another kid. That connection was what I had wanted to achieve all along.

Relinquishing my original, tightly structured, parallel page designs allowed a single, more organic design to develop. Despite my intention to stick to thirty-two pages, I found that I really needed more room to give the book a greater visual variety. At thirty-two pages, the book would have had too many dense multipaneled pages. Forty pages let me alternate these multipaneled pages with single full-page images and double-page spreads to give a visually interesting rhythm to the flow of the pictures. The eye scans the multipanel page quickly. The detail-rich double-page spread is a place where the eye can linger and spend

time slowly exploring. Especially in a wordless book, this kind of visual variety makes for a far more exciting reading experience.

I draw and revise compulsively until each composition is exactly as it will appear in the final painting. The one place I don't plan ahead is in the color palette. Not until I begin to paint the first piece of a book do I truly know what the color concept for that book will be. *Tuesday* was about intense nighttime blues and indigos. *The Three Pigs* was all about white space.

With *Flotsam*, the first piece I painted was the first double-page spread of the boy on the beach looking through the magnifying glass. It's a clear, sunny day. His beachcombing equipment, much of which is made out of primary-col-

Not until I begin to paint the first piece of a book do I truly know what the color concept for that book will be.

ored plastic, surrounds him. He is lying on a patterned beach towel. Uh-oh, I thought, this book is going to be about bright colors.

I've spent most of my life running away from bright colors, but there was no escape, so I dove into the bathing suits, T-shirts, buckets, shovels, and beach towels. The culmination of this cavalcade of color was the decision to fill the cover of the book with a close-up of a red snapper. There is more cadmium red in that one painting than in all the other art I have ever produced.

Deliberately leaving part of the process open to spontaneity can be scary. But to grow as an artist, I have to be willing to move into unfamiliar territory. It is there that I learn new things and keep my creative process from becoming routine.

It can also get scary when one idea doesn't work out, and then another doesn't, and time drags on. Panic can set in. But I've been through this before. Only two of my contracts have on them the name

of the book that I eventually produced. It would be nice if the path were always straightforward, but, in the end, I simply trust that if I focus on the process, something valuable will result.

There are many people who help me achieve that result. They are the same people I have mentioned previously, when I have addressed this gathering. I like that. I like that a lot.

Dinah Stevenson, Carol Goldenberg, and Donna McCarthy are, respectively, my editor, art director, and director of production. Those titles superficially describe our relationship. They are, truly, my collaborators.

Dinah Stevenson had great patience and great wisdom throughout the *Flotsam* saga. Her input during my creative

meandering was thoughtful and subtly delivered—particularly during the cheese incident. At one point in the process I had the idea of making the camera talk. The Chatti-cam, as I called it, would say, "Cheese!" Not, "Say cheese!"—I thought just "Cheese" would be funnier. So funny, in fact, that I decided I should retitle the book *Cheese*. While her words argued politely, yet firmly, against this, her eyes were saying, "Not in a million years!" Thank you for that, Dinah.

Incredibly, Carol Goldenberg is even more compulsive than I. Who knew simple black lines around pictures could lead to so many sleepless nights? Putting *Flotsam* together was exciting and challenging, and we continually found solutions that added even more to the book.

All this work might be wasted if the book were not printed with such attentiveness and skill. I never lose sleep over this, knowing that Donna McCarthy is overseeing the production of my books. Her care and meticulousness are a joy to behold.

And, once again, to everyone at Clarion Books, especially Marjorie Naughton and Joann Hill, thank you for all you do for me.

For the past twenty-eight years, Dilys Evans has been my agent. Again, that is a term that only superficially describes our relationship. Throughout our many adventures together, she has been first and foremost my good friend.

When I was growing up, artistic insecurity never had a chance to take hold at home. My mother and my father and my sisters and my brother always supported and encouraged my art, unconditionally. It was a wonderful environment in which to create. Likewise, where I work now is all I could ever ask for. I have a studio at home with my family around me. Kim, Kevin, and Jaime are the audience I want to please most. This is the best environment in which to create.

One of the top ten questions that kids ask is, "Which one of your books is your favorite?" They really seem to want me to pick one, but I can't. Each of my books has been a distinct creative experience, with its own struggles and insights. Each is unique to me.

When the phone rang that Monday morning in January, I looked at the caller ID, saw "Washington State Convention Center," and thought, "No way." But when I picked up the phone, Janice Del Negro informed me that, indeed, *way*. It is hard to describe my reactions. Elation over the fact that *Flotsam* had been chosen for the Caldecott collided with the overwhelming realization that I was receiving the award for a third time. Three times is a lot to absorb, and I'm still working on it. For now, I am enjoying the recognition that *Flotsam* is receiving. To be singled out by fifteen people who have devoted an entire year to the jury process is a very special thing. Thank you, Janice, and all the members of the 2007 Caldecott committee, for this incredible honor.

What will I say when people ask me, "How are you going to top this?" Well, I'm thinking about a smaller, quieter book. But you never know.

Thank you. 🐷

May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture

Books As Shelter: Going Home Again and Again

Kevin Henkes

Kevin Henkes, Caldecott Award medalist and renowned author of picture books and novels for children, delivered the 2007 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture at the McConnell Center for the Study of Youth Literature at the University of Kentucky School of Library and Information Science in Lexington on Sunday, March 4, 2007.

First things first: Thanks to the American Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children for administering the Arbuthnot Lectureship. And thanks to Bill Teale and his committee for selecting me as the Arbuthnot speaker for 2007. I must admit, this honor was unexpected. Frankly, I'd thought I was too young to be standing before you today. But here I am. And I'm grateful. I'm also grateful to Sharon McQueen, chair of the Arbuthnot Lecture Host Committee, for making me feel so at home in Lexington.

* * * * *

The house in which I grew up was not fancy. It was modest, familiar, squarish. Clapboard. When I was very young, it was painted a beige color, although more than a few people called it pink, which did not please my mother, for some rea-

trying to decide for an awkward moment if I'd betray my mother by doing so.

When I was still a boy we painted the house blue—a gray blue that seemed to be the color of a stormy sky, especially against the quintessential pale blue skies of summer that I remember best. As I grew up, strangers appeared at our door from time to time to request the name of the paint color and the store at which we'd gotten it. This made my mother smile, although I have no idea what she told them. The house remained blue until my parents sold it a handful of years ago, after living in it for nearly half a century.

This house was my only home for eighteen years, the only place I lived until I left for college. And yet, already, I remember it selectively. The porch is important as far as my memories are



Kevin Henkes and Lilly

son. "It's tan," she'd correct. One could sense her annoyance. I remember very clearly when a classmate's mother once said to me, "I know where you live—in the pink house on Carlisle Avenue." A simple nod from me would have sufficed—and I finally managed to produce one—but, being a sensitive child, I recall

concerned. As is the pantry, its size and the smell of it. And the kitchen, especially the table, the feel of it. So is the way the light would play with shadow on my plaid bedspread on summer afternoons, as it filtered through the rustling leaves of the big maple tree out my west-facing window.

I'm not sure if it's because I was a young artist or simply because I was observant, but stamped on my heart and in my head are the colors, smells, sounds, and textures of my house. These details mattered to me, but there were the other things as well, the bigger things. The life of a house holds them all—from birth to death. Just think of all the stories a house could tell.

In her book *A House, A Home*, M. B. Goffstein wrote:

A house has skin
and eyes
and bone,
a head,
a breast,
a heart.
We move around
inside a house,
and look out through its eyes.
What the house sees,
we see.
What it feels,
we feel more gently.
Our backs grow against its steps.

I was six years old when my parents announced that my mother was pregnant. At this time, I was the youngest in my family, the fourth. We were in the kitchen, all of us. We had finished dinner and were just starting dessert. The news came with the bowls of applesauce, which were sprinkled with crushed cinnamon graham crackers—one of my favorite foods as a boy. I remember a blurriness, and then quiet. I remember cheering. And I remember eating my dessert very slowly, carving shapes on the surface of the applesauce with my spoon. As long as I had my bowl of applesauce before me, nothing would change.

I was eleven when I answered the telephone call from the hospital the day my maternal grandmother died. The telephone was mounted on the kitchen wall. It was black, with a curly black cord that was tangled more often than not. The voice on the line asked for my mother, in a very serious manner. That was all. The voice did not identify itself, nor did I say, "May I ask who's calling, please," which we were supposed to do. No real information was given to me, and yet I knew instinctively that there was something about this call that was extremely impor-

tant—it was more important than any call I'd ever answered before. My mother came to the phone, grabbed it, pulled it and the cord around the corner into the pantry, and closed the door behind her. I don't remember how much time passed before my mother came out of the pantry to tell us that my grandmother, her mother, had died. But I remember, with great clarity, answering the telephone and passing it to my mother.

Birth and death. There is a commonness to both these experiences and a mysteriousness. It's interesting to me that the dominant memories of my brother's birth and my grandmother's death are not seeing my brother in the hospital for the first time, nor seeing my grandmother in her coffin at the funeral home, nor the funeral itself. The dominant memories are the dinner announcement and the telephone call—two scenes from my life that played out in my house, in the kitchen.

In both cases, ordinary time seemed temporarily suspended. The air became thick, is how I'd describe it. And electric. At once exciting and troubling. These were moments full of meaning, although at the time I wouldn't have been able to articulate what that meaning was. The unspoken message was that everything would be different from these moments on, like watching a spreading stain and knowing it will leave a permanent mark.

During bewildering times like the two just mentioned—and many, many other times, just because—I sought out the corner of the living room behind the big red armchair. I know now, from seeing photographs, that it wasn't really very big; and when I knew it and loved it, it was already faded, the color of watermelon. Still everyone referred to it as the red chair. It was worn in spots, so that you could see the weave, the crisscrossing of the threads. Despite its flaws, it was the perfect shield or barrier. The corner behind the red chair was a sanctuary of the highest order.

It was also my favorite place to read.

Here's a memory: I am a boy. I love books. I love to read them, and I love to look at them. Examine them. Smell them. Run my fingers over the paper. I'm huddled

in the corner behind the big red chair, with a stack of new library books. I feel complete. Happy. I feel as if nothing can disturb me. I'm enveloped. It's just me and my books behind the big red chair.

What is it about books? A well-made book is a most beautiful object. Square or rectangular. Compact. Solid. Trim. Relatively small, and yet, inside: the world.

When I first have contact with a new book by a favorite writer or illustrator, my excitement is real. I am radiant. And when I return, as I often do, to a book I particularly cherish, I feel at home and am again excited, again radiant.

Jane Smiley wrote the following in her book *13 Ways of Looking at the Novel*:

Many people, myself among them, feel better at the mere sight of a book. As I line up my summer reading... I realize that I have gained so much and such reliable pleasure from so many novels that my sense of physiological well-being (heart rate, oxygenation, brain chemical production) noticeably improves as I look at them. I smile. This row of books elevates my mood.

In her book *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen*, Fay Weldon wrote:

Truly, Alice, books are wonderful things: to sit alone in a room and laugh and cry, because you are reading, and still be safe when you close the book; and having finished it, discover you are changed, yet unchanged!

My house felt safe to me as a child. And books felt safe, too. If I'd had a troublesome day at school, just opening the back door and stepping into the hallway brought relief. More to the point, just seeing my house as I approached the corner of Albert and Carlisle and looked to the left brought relief. And then, losing myself in a book lightened my burden even more. Books were a shelter within a shelter. A home within a home.

Books as shelter. It seems as though books can provide the same basic things a house can: Protection. Safety. Comfort.

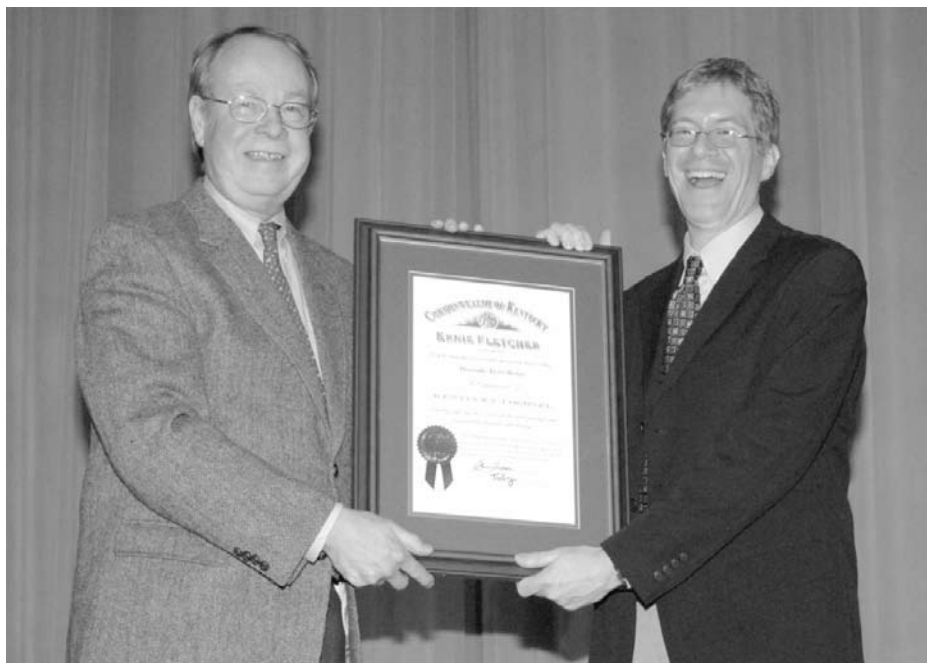
When you're lost in a book, it doesn't matter if you're the most popular kid in class. Or if you're the smartest. Or the best basketball player. Or if you hate your brother. Or if you're lonely and filled with a certain despair. What matters is the book and the world it brings you.

I led a rather sheltered life as a boy. But my interior life was anything but, thanks in part to books. Although I loved reading Beverly Cleary's Henry Huggins books, Keith Robertson's Henry Reed books, and Robert McCloskey's *Homer Price*, sad novels drew me in, in a profound way, and *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry, was my favorite. I reread it many times.

I've read it again only once as an adult, a few years ago, to see what it was about this book that captivated me so. *Call It Courage* had everything for a shy, artistic boy from Wisconsin who would one day become an illustrator and writer—a dead mother; a brave, strong, distant father; a guilty coward of a son, who proves to have, surprisingly (or not so surprisingly), the bravest heart of all; a dog; an exotic setting; a journey; a triumphant return home; and then a wonderfully ambiguous ending. I never could figure out if Mafatu died in his father's arms or not. I know what I think *now*. But that's not important. What's important is that I loved this book deeply, and that I could be truly frightened and have an incredible adventure and still be safe, at home.

At the time I was intrigued that Armstrong Sperry had not only written the book but illustrated it, as well. And one illustration, or its essence, anyway, remains clear to me to this day. In it, Mafatu and his dog, Uri, are in an outrigger canoe riding an ocean swell, with a wall of wave rising up behind them—a monstrous, jagged mountain. Shafts of light reach down dramatically from the sky to the water, like knives. The sail on the outrigger is white, like the small wing of a bird, against the looming darkness of the sea. It's a heart-stopping image that terrified and thrilled me more than thirty years ago. It still does.

John Updike understands this reaction and wrote about it eloquently in his book *Self-Consciousness*:



Jim Nelson (l), recently retired Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, presents Kevin Henkes with a framed Kentucky Colonel Commission. The Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky appointed Henkes to the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels. He is now Honorable Kevin Henkes, Kentucky Colonel!

Illustrations affected me more strongly than reality; a picture of falling snow, for example, whether in black-and-white line drawing or blurry four-color reproduction, moves me more than any actual storm.

That mere ink and paper can work such wonders is a miracle.

Is This You? by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Crockett Johnson, and *Rain Makes Applesauce* by Julian Scheer, illustrated by Marvin Bileck, are two books that I especially loved from an earlier time in my childhood. I owned *Is This You?*, and *Rain Makes Applesauce* was a library book that I checked out repeatedly. I was passionate about both of them.

In *Is This You?*, Ruth Krauss poses questions such as "Is this where you live?" and "Is this your family?" and "Is this your friend?" Crockett Johnson's illustrations show very silly, incongruous answers to the questions. The reader or listener is then urged to draw his or her own picture answers in order to make a little autobiographical book.

This is the book in which I truly fell in love with Crockett Johnson's artwork.

There is no other way to put it. I tried to copy his pictures. I wanted to draw exactly the way he did. Now, I'd say that Crockett Johnson's line work is simple, direct, and sure, and that his sense of design is to envy. I'd also say that his sensitive and comic view of childhood is masterful. Back then, I just knew what I liked.

As with *Is This You?*, there is a nonsensical quality to *Rain Makes Applesauce*, which is part of its draw for children, I'm sure. But there is a haunting quality to it, as well. Two lines of text and their accompanying illustrations, in particular, left their mark on me: "The wind blows backwards all night long" and "Clouds hide in a hole in the sky."

The words by themselves are thought-provoking enough for a particular kind of child. Add to them Marvin Bileck's artwork—intricate, calligraphic line and faded color that remains somehow bright, even luminous—and you have a combination that works beautifully, playing dark against light, silly against somber, familiar against mysterious.

Returning to these two books is like returning to a well-loved childhood home. Well, sort of.

A book stays the same, remains unchanged, even as the reader changes and grows. A childhood house can, and often does, change. I've driven past my childhood home several times since my parents sold it and have felt, strangely, that what made it mine is no longer there. It's gone, along with the maple tree that once stood in the front yard; it's hidden behind the new aluminum siding.

I used to make a point of driving by the house each time I was in my hometown, visiting. I don't any longer. But even if the house were torn down today, what it gave me is mine to keep.

The novelist Richard Russo has said, "Nobody leaps into the air from the air. We all leap into the air from something solid." The "pink"/blue house at 1431 Carlisle Avenue represents my something solid. It's where I'm from and where I was formed.

Readers of my books can catch glimpses of my childhood house: the bathroom I drew in *Clean Enough* and the porch and the kitchen in *Margaret & Taylor*. The houses in my early novels *Return to Sender* and *The Zebra Wall* offer glimpses without pictures.

Now, my novels tend to be set in houses very much like the houses I've lived in as an adult and as a parent. I realized recently, though, that whenever I'm writing a scene for one of my novels that takes place in a kitchen, I always see my childhood kitchen first, and then I must alter it, shape it differently to fit the book I'm working on. When I'm writing, I often reach back and find that what I'm looking for, or the seed of what I'm looking for, lies between the walls of 1431, both physically and emotionally. Perhaps all writers must look back before they can look ahead.

In the preface to his book *All the Days and Nights: The Collected Stories*, William Maxwell as an octogenarian wrote the following about himself at age twenty-five:

I had no idea that three-quarters of the material I would need for the rest of my writing life was already at my disposal. My father and mother. My brothers. The cast of larger-than-life-

size characters—affectionate aunts, friends of the family, neighbors white and black—that I was presented with when I came into the world. The look of things. The weather. Men and women long at rest in the cemetery but vividly remembered. The Natural History of home: the suede glove on the front-hall table, the unfinished game of solitaire, the oriole's nest suspended from the tip of the outermost branch of the elm tree, dandelions in the grass. All there, waiting for me to learn my trade and recognize instinctively what would make a story or sustain the complicated cross-weaving of longer fiction.

I was in high school when I discovered another book that became wildly important to me: Barbara Bader's *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within*. I found it at the Racine Public Library. If a book is a house, this book was, for me, a mansion. It was filled with reproductions of illustrations I loved and those I would soon love, by artists from Wanda Gág to Marie Hall Ets to Garth Williams to Palmer Brown to Maurice Sendak to Edward Gorey. I didn't read the book so much as absorb it and look through it. And look and look and look.

This was where I first learned of Jean Charlot, an artist who is now a favorite of mine. Although I recognized some of his art, I hadn't known his name nor his body of work.

And, this will show my age, my naïveté—I couldn't believe that there was an entire chapter devoted to Crockett Johnson. I thought that I was the only person in the world who knew of his greatness.

Barbara's book became the roof over my head while I prepared to become a published author and illustrator. Here was a big, thick, serious volume about picture books. Its mere existence legitimized, in a way, my career choice. I knew no one else my age, or otherwise, who wanted to do what I wanted to do: spend my life writing stories and drawing pictures to go with them.

A footnote: I finally got a copy of my own on my thirty-fifth birthday. My editor,

Susan Hirschman, gave it to me, and it was signed by Barbara Bader.

There are three addresses that have had an indelible effect on me. Three addresses that have a permanent home in my heart and that roll off my tongue without my thinking: 1431 Carlisle Avenue, for obvious reasons; 2716 Northwestern Avenue, the address of my grandparents' house when I was a boy; and 105 Madison Avenue. 105 Madison Avenue was the address of Greenwillow Books when I made my first trip to New York City in 1980.

Of course, I have fond memories of most of the places that I've lived as an adult, especially the house we lived in when both of our children were born and the house we live in now, which is everything I've ever wanted in a house. But there is something about those other addresses that is different. And that something is that they were experienced when I was a child. Or, in the case of 105 Madison Avenue, when I was a nineteen-year-old who was in the midst of realizing a dream, a nineteen-year-old who was, at the time, feeling everything with that raw immediacy of childhood.

Greenwillow Books moved from downtown to midtown Manhattan in 1991. Sometimes I find myself walking past the old building when I'm in New York. And invariably, the air is charged with high emotion. In this building—simply "105" is how I used to think of it—I began my work life. My first day in this "house" marked the beginning of the best time of my life (which I'm still living). Much about that day is hazy. Aside from being offered a contract for my first book (no small matter, to be sure!), I do remember the view from Susan Hirschman's corner office. It was substantial and spectacular, breathtaking for anyone, and particularly so for a kid from the Midwest who'd seen very little of the world beyond Racine, Wisconsin. The city was before me, around me, like a forest. I could see the Empire State Building. The Chrysler Building was right there, gleaming. I felt as if I were in the clouds, weightless.

Susan's office was filled—with things, color. Shelves were brimming with books and toys. The walls were covered with art. I wanted to look at everything.



Susan Katz, president and publisher of HarperCollins Children's Books; Kevin Henkes; Virginia Duncan, vice president and publisher of Greenwillow Books; and Susan Hirschman, founder and former publisher of Greenwillow Books.

I was particularly drawn to a painting that hung on Susan's wall. This painting came to symbolize for me everything about New York, books, and Greenwillow, my second first-home.

The scene depicted in the painting is that of a fair or carnival. A tent and a Ferris wheel rise up in the background against a cloudy, mottled sky. The foreground is comprised of a yellow green horizontal band—a field of grass. Above this is a darker green band erupting with brilliant, winking flowers of many kinds and colors. The dominant element is a gate. Two soldiers form the sides of the gate. The panel that connects the soldiers is red, white, and blue. Right in the middle of the panel is the image of a clown. The clown's elongated white face is wreathed by a yellowish gold collar that resembles flower petals or the rays of the sun. The clown's deeply furrowed brow and ruby red lips, and the streaks of dark makeup streaming down from his eyes like tears, add a melancholy edge to the happy scene. The painting is direct and fresh. There is a naive or folk-art quality to it that reminds me of the work of Henri Rousseau.

I learned much later that this painting was done by a man named Tom Jaleski, who just happened to be married to the writer Mary Stolz. The painting had been a gift to Susan and her husband from Mary and hers.

I was so taken by this painting—a captivation that grew over the years—that about

a decade after first seeing it, I wove it into my novel *Words of Stone*, the way I'd woven other parts of my life into the book. I very shyly asked Susan if we could reproduce a detail of it on the jacket. She said yes. Mary and Tom were thrilled. And I had a book jacket that will probably be my favorite forever.

In 2001, to mark the first Christmas in our then-new house, Susan sent us the painting. To keep. We hung it so that it's one of the first things you see

as you enter our house, and one of the first things we see as we come down the stairs each morning. I love the fact that the painting will be part of my children's memories, memories of the house in which they grew up.

* * * * *

My children are now nine and eleven. They're growing up right before my very eyes, and because of their continuous, sometimes rapid changes, I'm acutely aware of the passing of time. And because of my children, I often think back to my own childhood. I find myself trying to remember what I was like when I was their respective ages. I try to remember how I handled certain life experiences similar to those that they are facing.

When we moved into the house in which we now live, my son was four years old and my daughter was two. My wife and I were worried about the transition of the move, particularly for our son. He was sensitive and did not like change. In this instance, I had no similar childhood experience of my own to think back to, to draw upon, and neither did my wife. Perhaps this added to our uneasy feelings.

We tried to prepare him for the move long before it was to happen. We read picture books about moving to him. We walked by the new house, which was vacant and was only three blocks away. We played in the new yard, reminding him that he wouldn't have to make new friends, and that we weren't leaving the

neighborhood. We talked about his new room, and envisioned it together in all its potential glory, remembering to assure him that everything that he loved in his room—toys, books, posters—would, of course, move with us. His bed would be the same bed, his dresser the same dresser. We owned the new house for a few months before we moved in, so he got to be in the new space, actually see the room that would soon be his. We thought we were doing everything right.

I'd lie awake at night worrying about all the things that come with buying a house and selling one, including how my son would react to this new chapter in his life.

As it turned out, he made the transition to the new house unfazed. And it was his two-year-old sister who had a difficult time, who longed for the old house, who could not see the new house as hers. We had to go out of our way so as not to drive by the old house on our way to the new one. If we did drive past it, she'd lean over in her car seat and press her hand against the window. "Mine go home," she'd say plaintively.

"Mine go home" became her mantra.

Time passed, and when we hadn't heard her plea for a while, my wife and I took her for a testing stroll through the neighborhood. We were holding hands, the three of us, when we approached our former house.

My daughter broke free from my wife and me, ran up the front steps, and reached for the familiar, loose doorknob. "Mine go home," she said, her voice brimming with longing and fierce determination.

I suppose my wife and I shared a look of desperation. I suppose we pried my daughter's tiny fingers from the doorknob and scooped her up. I suppose my wife and I tried to divert her attention as best we could.

I don't recall the particulars. And I don't recall how or when this was no longer an issue. "Mine go home" disappeared from our lives. Time, like a balm, can heal, form a skin over things one thinks will never be overcome or forgotten.

Friends bought our old house and we go there for dinner regularly. Now it seems as if we'd never lived in the house, as far as my children are concerned. Even my daughter.

What our old house means to my daughter, to my son, to my wife, to me, is obviously not the same. And the meaning it holds for each of us can change. Even the painting at the bottom of our stairs that we all share, all live with, all see every day is a different painting to each of us.

It's the same with books. We all bring our own selves, or lives, to the reading of a book. As seen through different eyes, a book is many books.

One of my favorite examples of this involves the picture book *Benny Bakes a Cake* by Eve Rice.

Eve Rice is an author/illustrator who seems to know children inside and out. She knows what they care about and understands acutely their emotions and motivations. At first glance, her books seem light, simple—round, even. But they are oh-so-rich and full of angles.

Eve Rice is, I think, one of our finest writers for children. Her texts are carefully crafted—not one word is out of place or off. Her words flow gracefully from page to page and beg to be read aloud. Like Margaret Wise Brown, she understands rhythm and pacing. They seem to come easily to her.

My son connected passionately with her books *Sam Who Never Forgets*; *Goodnight, Goodnight*; and especially *Benny Bakes a Cake*.

When, in *Benny Bakes a Cake*, Ralph, the dog, knocks Benny's birthday cake off the table—the cake Benny helped make—real horror registered on my son's face, even after dozens of readings. Delicious horror. And each time we came to the illustration of Benny crying by the kitchen sink, my son would tenderly stroke the image of Benny with his finger.

He identified with Benny. I remember thinking at the time that Benny mirrored my son—his abilities, activity

level, accomplishments, failures. Most interesting to me, however, was how, as my son grew older, his loyalties shifted. He came to empathize with Ralph, the “bad” dog.

I have a memory of reading the book with both of my children: my daughter, the younger, is stroking Benny on the page exactly the way her brother used to do, saying, “Poor Benny.” And my son is stroking Ralph, saying, “No, poor Ralph.”

What Eve Rice has done, and done marvelously, is essentially given us two children—two children at different developmental stages. One could make the case that Ralph is “older”—an abandoned older sibling to a younger, attention-grabbing sibling.

I think what my son came to identify with in Ralph was Ralph's independence, his struggle to get what he wanted by himself. Ralph tried to do something on his own—to get the cake—without Mama. He did not have unblemished success. What child does?

Eve Rice has done all this indirectly, and has therefore made it all the more interesting.

My son and daughter each found something different in the book to latch on to. They both had interpretations that fit the shape and shadow of their lives. They both, for different reasons, gravitated to this book.

Reading a book can be like stumbling upon a well-lit house on the darkest of nights. One can see in, see clearly, see—perhaps—something one has never seen before; or see oneself clearly, perhaps for the first time, particularly if one is a young child. And what *I* see through the window will not be exactly what *you* see. Do you empathize with Benny? Or with Ralph?

When I'm truly in love with a book, absorbed fully by it, I'm in that well-lit house. I've entered it, I'm living in it. There can be a sea of darkness surrounding me, but I'm consumed, I'm in a container of light, oblivious to all but my interpretation of the book.

One's world can shrink and expand at the same time while reading a book. I know that feeling. When I read *Call It Courage* the first time, the world cracked open for me—I was reading about a kid who lived a life so very unlike mine. At the same time, because I was so involved, my “real” world shrank. I was oblivious to homework or chores or smells from the kitchen or bedtime or time itself. I had happily shuttered myself into my new little house and locked the door.

I'm sure that something similar was happening to my son with *Benny Bakes a Cake*. Sometimes he would look at the last illustration first, checking, I think, to see that the happy ending was still there—Benny hugging Ralph, with party hats and smiles for everyone. Sometimes he would flip right to the illustration of Benny crying. He wanted to look at it—really study it—before I read the book to him. And, sometimes, he just wanted to look at that particular picture. Nothing more. He was totally involved. He wasn't in our living room. He was in Benny's kitchen.

In the introduction to the Vintage paperback edition of her selected stories, Alice Munro, one of my favorite writers, had this to say about houses and story:

I don't always, or even usually, read stories from beginning to end. I start anywhere and proceed in either direction. So it appears that I'm not reading—at least in an efficient way—to find out what happens. I do find out, and I'm interested in finding out, but there's much more to the experience. A story is not like a road to follow . . . it's more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows. And you, the visitor, the reader, are altered as well by being in this enclosed space, whether it is ample and easy or full of crooked turns, or sparsely or opulently furnished. You can go back again and again, and the house, the story, always contains more than you saw the last time.

What my son was doing with *Benny Bakes a Cake* was not exactly what Alice Munro described, but it was similar—no doubt a child’s version of this way of experiencing a story. The Munro quote made me think about how, within a story, a writer crafts his or her words differently. In the same way in which rooms in a house are different and have different functions, the parts or pieces of a narrative are different and have different functions.

Fay Weldon wrote that Jane Austen knew “when to allow the audience to rest, when to and how to underline a statement, when to mark time with idle paragraphs, allowing what went before to settle, before requiring it to inform what comes next.”

A hallway is not a kitchen, nor a bedroom. Crisp, trenchant dialogue is not a descriptive paragraph, nor a climactic action sequence. The differences are vast, but they’re all part of the structure, equally important. Now, it’s easy for me to think of a piece of writing as a house, to think of “idle paragraphs” as meandering hallways, for example, or to see a character’s interior monologue as a window into his inner world, his soul. And sometimes, like a ghost in a house, what is left *unsaid* can have a real presence. The writing between the lines can be just as meaningful as the lines themselves.

The writer at work—the man or woman constructing the house—is an individual and has his or her own way of building the structure, the story. The writer has a voice.

When I was a boy, I could easily identify the houses in my neighborhood by smell. To this day I can close my eyes and draw up the different smells that distinguished these houses. One of the houses in my neighborhood had an odor so sharp that I found it unpleasant to be inside, although I liked the people who lived there quite a lot. Sometimes just standing on their front porch with the door open was enough to cause me to breathe through my mouth in an attempt to mask the smell. If I played with the kids who lived in this particular house, I wanted to do so outside or at my house.

Voice is like smell, in a way. Open a book and read, and very often one need not read much to know who is doing the writing. Take picture books, for example. Just read (forget the illustrations for the moment), and you know quite quickly if you are in the house of Margaret Wise Brown or Ruth Krauss or William Steig or James Marshall.

Listen to a novel. It doesn’t take long to be aware that you are in the house of, say, Beverly Cleary or Paula Fox. Both of these women are experts at what they do, although the music of their words is surely different. They each have their own way of bringing their “houses” to life. And each does so with great eloquence.

Book becomes house, house becomes real.

When one loves a house, it can become a living thing, take on human qualities, as in the M. B. Goffstein prose poem I quoted earlier. A house does indeed have “skin and eyes and bone.” I love to describe the houses in my books. They are the stage sets where my stories take place. Sometimes, depending on the particular story, a house carries considerable weight and is more like a character itself. In some books more than others, a house plays a big role.

In my novel *The Birthday Room*, the idea of “house” is extremely important. The book’s main character, twelve-year-old Benjamin Hunter, a young artist, is given two surprising birthday gifts. One is an invitation to visit his only uncle, Ian, a man he hasn’t seen since Ben was two years old. The other gift—this one from his parents—is an empty room in the newly remodeled attic of the family house. Benjamin’s parents’ intention is for Ben to use the room as an artist’s studio.

At the beginning of the novel I describe Ben’s house like this:

The room was on the second floor of the house, in the tree-shaded corner of what until a few months earlier had been a musty, unused attic. Ben’s parents had reclaimed the attic by having it remodeled to add extra living space to their small,

cramped bungalow. Two dormers had been raised—one on the front and one on the back of the house—and three rooms had been built. The largest room was for Ben’s mother to use as a weaving studio. The other good-size room was for Ben’s father; he had been dreaming for years of a quiet space all his own where he could work on his poetry and listen to his jazz CDs. And the third room, long and low roofed, had been planned as a reading room with a comfortable overstuffed chair, a skylight, and plenty of shelves to accommodate the overflow of books that seemed to multiply in stacks all over the house, starting in corners and spreading to end tables, countertops, and ottomans like some persistent growth.

Ben watched the progress of the renovation with great interest. Seeing the exposed structure of the house fascinated him—the beams and wires, the ancient plaster and lath stripes. The crew working on the house, he thought, wasn’t unlike a surgical team performing an operation. At the height of the project, the house was a body, skin peeled back to reveal muscles, bones, veins, arteries, and organs.

This is how I introduced Uncle Ian’s house:

Soon Ian turned off the highway onto a narrow dirt road, hemmed in by a dark wall of trees. The trees thinned, and the road wound past a few outbuildings. Ian’s voice found a different pitch. “Here we are,” he announced. “We’re home.” The car came to a stop near a rustic cedar-shingled house.

Ben lumbered out of the car, stretched, and looked around.

Lights were on inside the house, and there were many uncovered windows. The house appeared before them like a lantern, glowing brightly in the middle of a thicket at the end of the world.

Houses, and what they imply, became an integral part of the imagery of the book.

I wove nests and eggs into the story, as well, which tie in to other themes in the book: birth; rooms of different kinds, including wombs; interior versus exterior; keeping secrets versus telling them.

Some crucial scenes take place inside, others outside—always for a reason. In a couple of instances, I chose to have a character standing on a threshold as he or she was making a decision, or if he or she felt caught or somehow trapped, out of sorts.

The cool blast of indoor air met Ben like a wall. He stood on the threshold, separating the cold and the light within the house from the heat and the darkness without. Soon he would drift off to his room and to sleep, a bit relieved for having been honest, and a bit something else, but what he didn't know. Sad for his mother?

Thresholds, porches, windows, mirrors, staircases. All these can be more than props. I'm reminded of William Maxwell's "The Natural History of Home," which I talked about earlier. I'm also reminded of the painter Giorgio Morandi. Morandi spent his life painting the same bottles and tins repeatedly. Are they ordinary? Yes and no. As objects—yes. As subjects in his paintings—absolutely not. Morandi painted them so that they transcend their humbleness and homeliness and speak volumes about grace and form and, yes, complexity.

An object as ordinary as a table can be revealing, can help inform a character, can be a symbol of greater things, can be a way to get at the larger meaning. In this passage from *The Birthday Room*, a table provides information about Ben, building his characterization. It also hints at the hidden truths to be disclosed later:

The letter lay open between them on the ancient, wavy pine table at the far end of the store office. The paint on the table was robin's-egg blue and blistering. When Ben was little, he often amused himself while his parents worked by pretending that the tabletop was a great sea, the deck of cards stored inside the table's one drawer was his personal fleet of fifty-two ships, and he was

an admiral. Kneeling on a chair piled with oversize books, he guided the ships through dangerous waters infested with sleek paper-clip sharks and translucent cough-drop stingrays.

With his thumbnail, Ben broke open a cracking bubble of paint on the table. He blew the paint chips aside to reveal a honey-colored patch of wood. He wondered how much he didn't know about his uncle, how much his mother did. He decided that his mother was a bottle of secrets, and he wanted to know everything he deserved to know.

Here is another table, this one from Ian McEwan's novel *Enduring Love*:

There was comfort in reiteration, just as there was in the familiar weight of the wineglasses and in the grain of the deal table, which had once belonged to Clarissa's great-grandmother. There were smooth, shallow indentations in its surface near the knife-scarred edges, worn by elbows like ours, I always thought; many crises and deaths must have already been considered around this table.

I love Ian McEwan's table. He presents it simply and elegantly. If you're a fast reader, you might miss it altogether. The image of a table bearing witness to the ebb and flow and the great sorrows of life made me pause when I first read it. Without being flashy, without a self-conscious flourish of any kind, Ian McEwan makes the ordinary extraordinary.

I wrote *The Birthday Room* as my wife and I were having the attic in our first house remodeled. Life and work blended together, as they often do. Much of the actual writing of the book took place in our car, because it was too noisy and chaotic at home—the work crew coming and going, pounding and drilling, sanding and sawing, from breakfast till dinner—and because our daughter needed to nap. I'd kill two birds with one stone.

I'd toss my notebook into the car, strap our daughter—a baby—into her car seat, and drive until she fell asleep. (It should

be noted that neither of our children were good sleepers nor nappers. Driving them around in the car seemed to be the only way to get them to nod off.) I learned how to drive from our house in such a way as to avoid stop signs and traffic signals because, if the car slowed down before she'd fully gone to sleep, she'd start, then fuss and wriggle and cry. Once she'd been asleep for a fair amount of time, I'd pull over, grab my notebook, and get to work. I'd guess that a good third of *The Birthday Room* was written in the car.

This experience taught me something invaluable. I learned that I could, indeed, write in a car parked on some quiet side street in Madison, Wisconsin, in rain or shine. I learned that the only "house" I needed in which to write was the house inside my head.

If, before I had become a parent, someone had told me that this would be the case, I wouldn't have believed him. Before my son and daughter appeared in the world, I thought I needed perfect quiet, no interruptions, and the promise of no responsibility to anyone or anything but the book on which I was working.

Now, if I miraculously find myself with extra time alone or if the children are gone overnight, I feel a bit off-center, as if something is not quite right. I find that I need the dailiness of life to feed my soul for working, even if, oddly enough, the dailiness of life sometimes keeps me from doing just that—working.

Fay Weldon touches on this in *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen*:

For many, if life provides uninterrupted leisure for writing, the urge to write shrivels up. Writing, after all, is part of life, an overflow from it. Take away life and you take away writing.

Weldon also says:

Writing is an odd activity—other people have occupations, jobs; the writer's life is work, and the work is the life, and there can be no holidays from it. If the pen is not working, the mind is thinking... the unconscious ponders on. Even in sleep you are

not safe: dreams pertain to life, and life to dreams, and both to work.

I spend less time actually putting pen to paper than I did before I became a parent, but I don't work less. I can't simply turn the "writing button" off. I might be in the grocery store or at a soccer game or out for dinner when something strikes me, when some plot point or description nudges its way into my consciousness, and I'm diverted because I can't *not* be. If I'm lucky, and whatever it is that pops into my head is something I've truly been searching for—a perfect adjective, a closing sentence for a chapter, a line of dialogue that will be the turning point of an important scene, a missing piece of the narrative puzzle—then I become intoxicated by this undercurrent. I never mean to appear distant or distracted in these instances, but I suspect that sometimes I do. I'm in the magnetic, shadowy periphery between my real life and the life of the book I'm working on.

Chekhov once said, "Every person lives his real, most interesting life under the cover of secrecy."

I think that this is even more the case for writers. Writers have their own lives, and then they have the lives of their characters to deal with. Lives to be created out of thin air, lives that are a part of them for months and years.

To an onlooker, I could easily have seemed to be some odd character, myself, as I sat in the car scribbling in my notebook, working on *The Birthday Room*. But once my daughter was asleep, I was far away from my own life and world. Under the cover of secrecy, I was altogether somewhere else, someone else.

Consider another house—the White House. In the spring of 2003, I was asked by one of Laura Bush's assistants to participate in the annual White House Easter Egg Roll. I happened to be in New York when the request came to my publisher.

When I was told of the request, I felt a rush of excitement. I pictured us—my family—as if in a scene in a large candy egg, standing tall, dressed-up, shiny, with that famous house as a backdrop.

But it didn't take long—minutes? seconds?—for a dark feeling that more than rivaled my excitement to exert its pull. Over the course of a few days, I tried to convince myself that the White House belonged to all Americans, and that I should go. It was to be the 125th anniversary of the event, I reminded myself. I think I tried to be judiciously ignorant. But it didn't work. Given what was happening in the world and within the administration, I knew in my heart that I couldn't accept the invitation.

When I told Virginia Duncan, my editor since Susan's retirement, that I wouldn't take part in the celebration, and again after I'd written Mrs. Bush to tell her as well, I felt the weight of the world lifted from my shoulders. I felt the sense of enormous relief that accompanies making the right decision.

The relief didn't last long, however—during this time, I felt uneasy in general, the world's troubles looming like a black cloud over everything. It was much like the way I'd felt after September 11, 2001. Most books couldn't work their typical magic during those tense, horrid, numbing weeks and months that autumn and winter. I couldn't read—couldn't concentrate on—novels, novels which had always been a saving grace for me in troubled times. But I did find a certain solace in picture books, in those worlds between two covers that, frankly, seemed better than the real world I was living in.

I would try to work, but what I'd usually end up doing would be sitting in my studio listening to NPR. And I'd look at picture books.

I was scheduled to do a book signing in my hometown on September 22, 2001. The arrangements had been made months prior. I telephoned the owner of the bookstore shortly after the disastrous day to say that I assumed that the signing would be cancelled or postponed and that I understood. The owner said that, no, the planned event would not be changed in any way, and that children needed something like this more than ever. She was adamant. "They need books," she said.

I went to the store in a fog, unprepared for the goodwill that met me. I even

experienced moments of real joy that day. Because of books.

After those first awful weeks, I still couldn't write, but I could draw. It was the artwork for my board book *Wemberly's Ice-Cream Star* that finally got me back on track. And I continued to look at picture books. Sometimes for hours. Perhaps I was seeking a temporary haven. I returned to the same books again and again, day after day.

These are some of the picture books that were my daily bread: *A Child's Good Night Book* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Jean Charlot; *Minou* and *The Thank-You Book* by Francoise; *Me and My Captain*, *Natural History*, and *Our Snowman* by M. B. Goffstein; *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Crockett Johnson, and *Charlotte and the White Horse* by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Maurice Sendak; *Goodnight, Goodnight* by Eve Rice; and *The Moon Jumpers* by Janice May Udry, illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

What the picture books I turned to have in common is a gentle touch, and genuine beauty with substance to match it. They are quiet, quietly lovely. None of them is very big, physically; most are small. They aren't all books I loved as a child or even knew, nor are they all favorites of my children, so it wasn't nostalgia that drew me to them. Each, in its own way, is about longing, in some cases deep longing. I can only guess that this was part of the appeal of these books at this particular time in my life. It's interesting that as an adult, it was picture books that I needed, but in the words of William R. Scott, the brilliant publisher, a picture book is "the simplest, subtlest, most communicative, most elusive, most challenging book form of them all."

Where houses are concerned, there are many notable children's books, from Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House* to Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House books. Two of my personal favorites are *A Very Special House* by Ruth Krauss and Maurice Sendak, and *Owl at Home* by Arnold Lobel.

Another favorite house of mine, this time a single image, is Arnold Lobel's

from *Whiskers and Rhymes*, which shows a cat reading a book, sitting beside a little house overflowing with books. Books stream out of windows and the chimney and rise in curving, colorful piles, drawn with a flinty, energetic line, to more than twice the height of the house. A similar image of Arnold's that graced the cover of *The Horn Book Magazine* in the late 1980s shows, once again, a cat reading by a house, but this time the house itself is formed of books, with the roof, an open book, providing perfect protection.

My favorite house of all, though, is really not a house. It is Sendak's little structure in Ruth Krauss's *Charlotte and the White Horse*. It's actually a stable, but it looks so like a house, a house the way a child might picture one, and so it is a house to me, a perfect one, and always will be.

The front of the structure is open, so we see into it. And because there is one large window on the back wall, we see out, as well, at the same time. This delighted my daughter when she was young. "It's inside out," she'd say, smiling and pointing. And it is, in a way. Inside/outside. Precise and abstract. Small and vast. Dreamlike and real. It's nothing and everything at once. In its sparseness it seems to include all things, the world.

Consider the window. In the first illustration Charlotte fills the window, hinting at the moon to come, a look of pure love on her round face. In turn, the window frames land and sky in all their variety: blue sky and green grass divided into triangles; a square of creamy snow; a night sky of darkest blue with stars like sparkling white flowers; and another night sky, this time much paler with a luminous full moon and a soft nimbus about it. At one point, layers of clouds swarm in, packing the window frame, looking like foamy, rolling, surging waves. Elemental.

This little house is a symbol—clear-eyed, central, sincere, profound.

* * * * *

Thinking about books and thinking about houses led me down a diverging path (or hallway), led me to construct, in

my mind's eye, the perfect house interior from children's book art.

My house would have a kitchen like the one in *Benny Bakes a Cake*. It would have the great green room from *Goodnight Moon*, and a bedroom like Max's in *Where the Wild Things Are*.

There are a number of memorable beds in children's books; I'd have Crictor's long, long jaunty one from *Crictor*; Peter's off-kilter, knobby one from *A Snowy Day*; Curious George's charming egg-yolk-yellow one with its chirping birds atop each bedpost; and Frances's from *Bedtime for Frances*, which is the most solid, sturdy, childlike box of a bed imaginable.

The staircase in my house would be Owl's from *Owl at Home*—chunky and strong with a most impressive newel post.

My house would have two bathtubs: Babar's with its bright green feet from *The Story of Babar*, and the one in Marc Simont's *The Stray Dog*, which can comfortably hold a boy, a girl, and a dog, with room to spare. And of course I'd want to paint my bathrooms blue.

Scattered throughout my house I'd have several of Vera B. Williams's chair from *A Chair for My Mother*, and several of Crockett Johnson's ottoman from *Ellen's Lion*. If a hippo were an ottoman, this is what it would look like.

M. B. Goffstein would provide a shelf of knickknacks from *Me and My Captain*. I'd include rugs and carpets courtesy of William Steig, wallpaper and drapery courtesy of Anita Lobel, and cozy clutter courtesy of Margot Zemach.

My house would have a piano—Barbara Cooney's majestic piano from "*I Am Cherry Alive*" the *Little Girl Sang* by Delmore Schwartz—not because I play one, but because we had one when I was a boy and because my wife thinks all houses need one. And there would be only one book on the piano: *Chansons de France pour les Petits Français*. I don't read music and I don't read French, but no matter. This is one of the most beautiful books ever made. Maurice Boutet de Monvel's soft colors and striking compositions make

for some of the most gorgeous illustrations I've ever seen.

And last, I'd keep Harold's purple crayon on hand, just in case there was something I forgot.

Even though I created it, my imagined house is fragmented in my mind. It's comprised of bits and pieces, after all. I may be the architect, and yet those bits and pieces don't fit together neatly into a solid form. It's not a real house with a real floor plan. I've never lived in it.

Even my childhood house has become a little fragmented in my mind, distorted; I suppose this is due to my age. I no longer remember everything in perfect detail, and yet I sense that I carry it all with me in some corner or deep pocket inside me. I suspect we all carry many things we're not aware of. I wonder if we, in one way or another, carry all the books we've read.

I was one of those parents who read to his children in utero. And, as I write this, I still read aloud to them every day, in the morning from 6:30 to 7 A.M. as they eat breakfast before school. We keep track of the novels I've read on a list in the back hallway. We're currently at number eighty-nine.

I had a fairly large collection of children's books long before I became a parent. It was something of a struggle to give up my collection when my son was born. My books were in nearly perfect condition, and I knew that if I moved them from "my bookshelves" to the "family bookshelves" their condition would take a nosedive.

They did, of course, but it was worth it. I reclaim books as they're outgrown. Jackets are often long gone. Pages have been ripped. Bindings have been strained and stained. But the books have done what they were meant to do.

If only I'd known Anne Fadiman's essay "My Ancestral Castles" earlier, sharing my books wouldn't have been a struggle at all. She begins her essay like this:

When I was four, I liked to build castles with my father's pocket-

sized, twenty-two volume set of Trollope. My brother and I had a set of wooden blocks as well, but the Trollopes were superior: midnight blue, proportioned to fit a child's hand, and, because they were so much thinner than they were tall, perfect, as cards are, for constructing gates and drawbridges. I own them now. . . . I can think of few better ways to introduce a child to books than to let her stack them, upend them, rearrange them, and get her fingerprints all over them.

Since reading Anne Fadiman, my wife and I have allowed, many times now, our copy of the substantial Riverside Shakespeare and our two volumes of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* to be used as part of grand constructions with blocks, Tinkertoys, and plastic animals.

Houses without books make me uneasy. That's why ours is filled with them. And that's why I put them in my books, both my picture books and my novels. I checked my picture books to make certain that this was true. And it was. Books—thick and thin—are placed here and there about the houses, necessary clutter. I'm guessing Anne Fadiman would approve.

My copy of *Benny Bakes a Cake* is now back in my possession, and it is a wreck, but a well-loved one. It's the same story for *Rain Makes Applesauce* (which I'd acquired as an adult, but before I'd become a parent). I do, from time to time, imagine some of these gems in their previous, pristine lives, and sigh. But then I think of what they've done for my children.

Books are important and powerful. I truly believe that they can help shape young lives. They can help one learn empathy, increase understanding of other people and ideas in a time in which intolerance is pervasive. They can provide ballast in an unpredictable world. They can also provide escape and be pure fun—no small feat.

Books, in the words of the British publisher Diana Athill, "have taken me so far beyond the narrow limits of my own

experience and have so greatly enlarged my sense of the complexity of life: of its consuming darkness, and also—thank God—of the light which continues to struggle through."

I sometimes wonder how many of the books from their childhood my kids will remember, and how far back their memories will go. When they're middle-aged, will *Benny Bakes a Cake* be part of an important memory?

Who knows? The brain is such an intricate, complicated thing. Why do we remember some things and not others? Why do I still remember the smells of certain houses from my childhood?

Not long ago, on a book tour, I was at lunch with a group of people my age and a little older, all connected to books in some way. The topic of earliest memories came up, and we took turns sharing them. Here's mine: I'm sitting on my grandmother's lap, in her house (2716 Northwestern Avenue), by a window. I'm looking out the window, watching my father walk away. It's gloomy outside. The room is shadowy, dark around the edges. The only light is the thin light from the window. I remember a lacy curtain; I move it back and forth. I remember feeling happy and sad at the same time.

That's it. It's not a complete memory—just a dreamlike glimpse, a fragment, but an enduring fragment nonetheless. It haunts me.

If my father had left my mother or died when I was young, this memory would have more weight, but neither of these instances is the case.

In comparison with those of the others, my memory was somewhat disappointing, less interesting. I was the only writer or artist in the group, and I had the least dramatic memory and the least complete one. Some of the others' memories were earlier than mine and they were fully formed and had a narrative thrust that mine was lacking.

I felt odd for a few minutes, as if this were a contest and I'd lost. Wasn't I, the artist, the writer, supposed to have the better memory? The thought was fleet-

ing; we moved on in the conversation to other things. Later, I came to realize the power of my own first memory. If nothing else, this particular memory is part of the foundation—one of the fundamental building blocks—of the house that is me. I am what I am.

In 1976, Elizabeth Coatsworth wrote in her book *Personal Geography*:

One's past is not something we leave behind, but something we incorporate. . . . Outwardly, I am eighty-three years old, but inwardly I am every age, with the emotions and experiences of each period.

We have what we have, and we take it, and live, and live some more, building upon what we've been given and what we've learned, building and living, living and building.

And so the house goes.

* * * * *

We return to things we love. We go home.

It makes sense: we return to things we love. Including books.

I returned to *Call It Courage* when I was a boy. Again and again. My son returned to *Benny Bakes a Cake*. Again and again.

Ending a journey, ending a book, ending a speech . . . home is a good, fitting destination.

At the end of *Call It Courage*, the boy, Mafatu, makes it home, barely so, "wasted and thin," to a father whose "face was transformed with joy."

At the end of my book *Kitten's First Full Moon*, Kitten goes home after a frustrating, somewhat perilous journey "and there was a great big bowl of milk on the porch, just waiting for her."

At the end of *Where the Wild Things Are*, Max returns home to the place "where someone loved him best of all." We never see his mother, but his supper is waiting for him "and it was still hot." We know she loves him. We don't need to hear it in her words. We see it. It's hard to describe

what a home can do, what a family, when it works, can be. Sometimes, words are beside the point.

T. S. Elliot wrote:

There's no vocabulary
For love within a family, love that's
lived
in
But not looked at, love within the
light of
which
All else is seen, the love within
which
All other love finds speech.
This love is silent.

Max goes home again and again—every time someone reads the book.

Kitten goes home again and again—every time someone reads the book.

Mafatu goes home again and again—every time someone reads the book.

They are reliable, unfailing.

People, in real life and in books, go home, whatever and wherever it might be. Home. It's a likely place.

For Max and Kitten and Mafatu and Peter Rabbit and scores of others, home is the final destination. Home is also the final destination for Martha, the main character in my novel *Olive's Ocean*.

This is how I ended *Olive's Ocean*; and it's how I'll end this speech:

She'd only run a short distance when she realized that what she wanted was to be home. She turned at the next corner to take the fastest way. Within minutes, she was in her own yard.

After catching her breath, she opened the front door and stepped into the familiar light of the entryway. Everything was safe here, stamped on her heart: the noises, the smells, the look and feel of each room. And even though she hadn't gone far or been gone long, she needed to say it, for her own sake, and she did so, loudly: "I'm home." 🐾

2007 Wilder Medal

The 2007 Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal was awarded posthumously to James Marshall, author and illustrator of the George and Martha books, the Fox easy reader series, *The Cut-Ups*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*—a Caldecott honor book in 1989. He also illustrated the Miss Nelson books and

The Stupids series, written by Harry Allard. Marshall died in 1992.

ALSC heartily thanks Houghton Mifflin Children's Books, the Penguin Young Readers Group, and Weston Woods Studios, a division of Scholastic, for the creation of a special video highlighting Marshall's career, "Remembering James Marshall: The Laura Ingalls Wilder

Award." The video was shown at the Newbery/Caldecott/Wilder Banquet during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., in lieu of an award acceptance speech. We thank also Bill Gray, who accepted the Medal on behalf of Marshall and thanked the committee "for acknowledging the triumph of his monumental silliness."

Sprinters, Skaters, and Schnauzers

Metaphors for Book Award Evaluation

Jonathan Hunt

Evaluating a field of books in any given year to determine a small handful of winners is a daunting task, one that can seem perplexing in spite of carefully delineated guidelines. How does one compare apples to oranges? How does one bring as much objectivity as possible to a very subjective process? And just what does the word “distinguished” really mean anyway?

For answers to these questions we might look to other models of competition—dog show, figure skating, foot race—to see if they can inform our thinking about our book awards.

How does one compare apples to oranges? Perhaps the same way one would compare poodles to Pomeranians. The great thing about a dog show, of course, is that every breed competes against itself, and the best of breed moves on to the next level: best of show. At this level, dogs are compared not only to each other, but also to how closely they each approach the standard of excellence within their own breed. (For another take on the dog show metaphor, check out Leda Schubert’s article in the July/August 2006 *The Horn Book Magazine*, “Best in Show.”) If book genres can be compared to dog breeds, then the 2006 ALA youth media awards were particularly notable for their diversity, as the Caldecott, Newbery, and Printz committees all recognized poetry and informational books.

Going to the Dogs

Perhaps the dog show metaphor invites us to evaluate each genre in its own right, particularly the overlooked ones. Which of all these poetry titles is the most distinguished? Which of all these informational titles is the most distinguished? These books—best of breed, if you will—should then automatically be given serious consideration for best of show.

This line of thinking can also help us look more critically at our biases beyond genre. If I tend to be a plot-driven reader, I might ask myself, which of all these character-driven novels is the most distinguished? If I tend to prefer third-person narrators, I might ask myself, which of all these first-person narrators is the most distinguished? Moreover, while comparing books to each other is our ultimate measuring stick, the dog show meta-

phor suggests that there is certainly much to be gained from comparing books to themselves, that by isolating books first by genre or other similarities, and then comparing them to more dissimilar books, we honor and respect both the conventions of the genre and the ambition of the author.

Flips and Flair

And speaking of ambition, while we ultimately do judge the books, we are also by extension judging the performance of the author, and that leads us to our next metaphor: ice skating. The trick in ice skating, of course, is to perform a routine that captures the perfect blend of technical difficulty and artistic flair. Book award guidelines rightfully do not allow for an explicit discussion of books in these terms because it moves away from what we can know and judge (the book at hand) to what we ultimately cannot (the mind and will of the author).

Nevertheless, these notions do present an interesting dichotomy for individual committee members to wrestle with. How do you compare a well-written, but safe, book with a much more ambitious book, but one not without flaws? There is no easy answer to this question of technical difficulty and artistic flair. It’s one that committee members are left to grapple with on their own.

Some genres such as picture books and poetry, no matter how great the artistry of their creators, are routinely passed over ostensibly because their efficiency with words belies their worthiness as serious contenders. To be sure, there is a degree of difficulty implied by a longer, more complex work, and—all things being equal—a great novel should routinely beat out a masterpiece of a spare picture book text, but all things are rarely equal and, if there were any justice in this world, such fine shorter texts should stand better chances than mediocre novels, especially if we have learned anything from the dog show metaphor because the question before us now is not necessarily is this novel better than that picture book, but rather

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which book comes closest to achieving perfection within its genre. Seen in this light, there is no reason why we should not expect to see books such as *Show Way* and *A Wreath for Emmett Till* dot the award rosters with greater frequency.

A Race of Distinction

If the dog show metaphor suggests diversity, and the ice skating metaphor suggests difficulty, then the foot race metaphor addresses distinction. Words such as “excellence,” “eminence,” and “distinction” make frequent appearances in the guide-

fourteen-year-old or in one for a four-year-old, whether it is in a novel or a beginning reader or a picture book, and the foot race metaphor nudges us to look for it in unexpected places. Does this novel dominate its peers to the same degree as this picture book text dominates its peers? Does this beginning reader dominate its peers to the same degree as this poetry? Which books are separating themselves from the pack of contenders? Which of them are truly distinguished?

Note, also, that while runners in a race have both strengths and weaknesses, in the end it is the strengths that compensate for the weaknesses and enable them to win, and so it is with book

Obviously the goal in a foot race is to break away from the pack and cross the finish line first to separate oneself from the competition and cross clearly ahead of the others so that there is no question who the winner is. That would be the ideal situation, to be sure, but that is the kind of distinction we are seeking in book award evaluation.

lines, but each member and the committee as a whole must strive toward a working definition of what that means, what it looks like.

Of course, distinguished books should exhibit exemplary writing in terms of plot, character, setting, theme, and style, but truthfully, many books published every year contain elements of distinguished writing. Such guidelines really do not help much with the task of going from dozens of contenders down to a handful. Moreover, I would argue that they only help us define what a notable book is rather than a distinguished one. To my mind, the notable appellation is an absolute standard (meaning that we are measuring a book against specific criteria) whereas distinction is more of a relative term (meaning that the books are being measured against each other), hence the foot-race metaphor.

Obviously the goal in a foot race is to break away from the pack and cross the finish line first to separate oneself from the competition and cross clearly ahead of the others so that there is no question who the winner is. That would be the ideal situation, to be sure, but that is the kind of distinction we are seeking in book award evaluation. We need to find excellence, then, wherever it is in our field of books, whether it is in a book for a

award evaluation. Books have strengths and weaknesses, too, but it's a holistic evaluation. When a particular book does not win so many people assume that it was due to some fatal flaw found in the book, and certainly we have all been in book discussions where a lot of henpecking takes place, so it is not an unreasonable assumption to make, but while a certain amount of that does happen in award discussions, the bulk of the discussion is focused on which books have the strongest strengths rather than which ones have the fatal flaws.

Diversity, difficulty, and distinction—we hope an appreciation of these ideas would grow organically out of the award discussions, but it is something that also needs to be cultivated by individual members throughout the year in preparation for the discussions. It is during the preceding year that committee members must examine their thinking, clarify it, refine it, and focus it.

It's my hope that by thinking about these ideas—dog show, ice skating, and foot race—that committee members will begin to internalize an appreciation for the breadth of their charge, to look for excellence in overlooked genres, and to seek out that literature that is truly distinguished. ☺

Storytime Model for Large Groups

Implications for Early Literacy

Amanda Williams

Half of a young child's lifetime learning occurs in the first five years.¹ Because children do not usually begin formal education in public or private school until age four or five, parents and early childhood caregivers can appropriately be identified as a child's first and most important teachers. How do these teachers prepare children for meaningful, literate futures in a formal school environment?

Gordon Wells states that a child's literacy development depends on the number of *literacy events* that occur when a young child is exploring and attempting to make sense out of language and print.² One individual who can be a model for providing meaningful interactions between young children and age-appropriate literature is a children's librarian in a public library. Parents or caregivers and their children can experience and explore children's books, rhymes, songs, and imagination activities by attending storytime programs presented at public libraries.

Storytime in Public Libraries

If reading books is considered a valuable early childhood experience, why don't all public libraries offer several storytime programs each week? Library directors may think their library does not have adequate staff, resources, or time to provide high-quality, regular storytime programs. Often libraries without programs are very small, have only one paid employee, and are open only a few hours each week.

Finding the time and space to provide storytime can be challenging. In addition, locating a community volunteer with the talent to share stories and also the necessary knowledge of young children can be a difficult task for a library director. In other situations, the community demand may be too overwhelming, and an administrative decision is made to limit storytime offerings to on-site programs for individual children and their parents. Such decisions often exclude a large number of a community's Head Start preschoolers as well as children in other local child-care facilities from receiving a valuable early childhood experience.

The focus of this article is to present a model for public library storytime providers that can assist them in maximiz-

ing library services to preschool children and their caregivers. The *Storytime Model for Large Groups* was influenced by three main factors:

- The fact that no such model currently exists.
- The data generated in my doctoral dissertation, *Providers' Perceptions of Public Library Storytime: A Naturalistic Inquiry*.³
- My personal experience providing storytime for large groups.

Storytime Model for Large Groups of More Than Thirty Preschoolers and Caregivers

This model is only a guide and is not designed to be implemented as an exact replication. All storytime providers have unique personalities and talents that should be incorporated in their library programs. Also, this model is designed for preschool storytime and not for large audiences of toddlers, which should be avoided.

- Encourage large groups to preregister for storytime so you can know approximately how many children will be attending. This will also be helpful in knowing at what point to *officially* begin the program.
- Because storytime participants may include groups of children from child care facilities, allow enough program time for these groups to arrive at the library and get situated in

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- the storytime area. Including audience arrival and departure time, a large-group storytime program may last forty-five minutes to an hour.
- Wear distinguishing clothing that helps identify you as the storytime provider.
 - Introduce yourself and tell the children where they are. Remember there may be new children who do not know you and have never been to the library.
 - Consider consulting with caregivers when choosing storytime themes and, if appropriate, relate the theme to what the children are learning at preschool.
 - Create publicity materials, such as handouts and posters, to advertise programs and themes.
 - Practice your program to familiarize yourself with the books and activities so you can have good eye contact with the audience. This will keep children engaged and listening.
 - Provide pre-storytime activities or make books available for the children to read and caregivers to share with the group before storytime officially begins.
 - Include a regular beginning and ending activity.
 - Project your voice and be more animated than you might normally be with a smaller group.
 - If necessary, consider standing during storytime for greater visibility.
 - With large groups, draw the children into the stories with questions before and after the books are shared.
 - Describe and define any unusual concepts or words that occur in a story before you begin reading to the children.
 - Think of your storybook sharing as being more similar to storytelling or theater to minimize children's questions and interruptions as you read.
- Consider using recorded music or singing during storytime to keep the group focused and engaged.
 - Share books with large or brightly colored pictures, and be sure that everyone in the audience can see the book.
 - Consider using big books or stories with props, such as flannel board stories or puppets.
 - Consider having occasional guest presenters. They will add variety to the program and expand literature-sharing experiences and learning opportunities.
 - Elicit assistance with crowd control and craft activities from adult volunteers, home-schooled children in the community, caregivers, or other library staff members.

National Initiatives

The 1990s brought a greater awareness and understanding of the importance of a child's first few years of life. The National Education Goals were established by President George H. W. Bush and the governors of all fifty states in 1989, and the Clinton administration successfully made these goals federal law in March 1994.

These goals are now known as Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Public Law 103-227.⁴ The Center for the Book at the Library of Congress created the Library/Head Start/Museum Partnership Project in the early 1990s that facilitated the Viburnum Family Literacy Project. The Viburnum Foundation provided grants that promoted cooperative family literacy projects between public libraries serving disadvantaged populations and another community organization that serves children and families.

This model is also important in fulfilling the mission of Every Child Ready to Read, a cooperative initiative between ALA's Public Library Association (PLA) and Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). This program began in 2000 after the National Institute of

Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) released a report on research concerning American children and their reading development. PLA contracted with Grover C. Whitehurst and Christopher Lonigan to develop a model training program for parents and caregivers, which resulted in Every Child Ready to Read. The PLA and ALSC partnership is focused on establishing public libraries as partners in the educational continuum.

Utilizing the Model

The storytime model for large groups is not part of the training materials for Every Child Ready to Read, but it supports the research and philosophy of the program. If librarians can provide successful storytime programs for larger groups of children, there could be more opportunities for children in child care to attend a public library storytime. Not only would the children benefit from the literacy event, but the caregivers would have an excellent model to follow when providing storytime at their child care facilities.

More than twenty years ago, Smardo concluded that public libraries should provide storytime—especially live storytime programs—for children ages three to five and regularly offer programs for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and children in child care.⁵

Although the storytime model for large groups may seem rather specific and prescriptive, there are aspects of the model that may not work in every situation and should be deleted or adjusted. A clear understanding of the social and developmental needs of the audience is most important. Consider this model as a guide and adapt it to each unique storytime audience and program.

The storytime model for large groups has important implications for educators, child-care providers, and public library administrators as well as for storytime providers. Here are some additional suggestions to consider:

- Trained consultants should provide continuing education for public

Examples at Work

At the Woods Branch of the Metropolitan Public Library in San Antonio, Texas, storytime was a year-round activity without preregistration or sessions. One librarian provided storytimes for large groups of children in child care with audiences of as many as fifty to seventy-five children, ages three to five. The main goal of the storytimes was “for children to love to read.” She said, “Reading is necessary for education and understanding and is a key to a better life.” She wanted as many children as possible to experience her programs with the hope that if she can help children learn to read, their lives will be much easier.

A children’s program technician at the Main Branch of the public library in Greenwood, Texas, said, “I have had some huge groups—maybe sixty—because someone didn’t call and just showed up. It (storytime for sixty children) is a whole different kind of performance. . . . I think it makes me a little more theatrical. Storytime should take children out of their everyday world in a pleasant group experience . . . a shared experience very much like theater, and it (storytime) is literary entertainment that is kind of magical.”

library staff to inform them of the latest trends and approaches in providing storytime.

- Current experts’ models should be adapted and utilized more often when planning and presenting storytime programs.
- Public library storytime providers should collaborate with professionals who care for or teach young children.
- Early childhood educators and storytime providers should work together to achieve National Education Goal One.
- More funds should be appropriated to public libraries so storytime pro-

grams can be provided outside the library for individuals who are not traditional library users.

These suggestions correspond to what William Teale said in his speech at the Achieving School Readiness Institute held at the University of Texas at Austin in 1994. Teale made two valuable suggestions as to what libraries can do to promote early literacy. He encouraged libraries to work cooperatively with family literacy programs or other community groups that serve children in their homes in community locations . . . “The second way libraries can promote early literacy is through special programs that the library itself runs . . . (e.g., storytime).”⁶

Think of the storytime model for large groups as a framework for program planning that will provide more children and their caregivers early literacy experiences at a public library storytime. ☺

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Clockwise from top left: Victoria Bohache is pleased to pull out alien "guts" during this experiment with Jennifer Sommer; Winnie Johnson, library practicum student, gets in on the fun; teen volunteers Benjamin Banning and Austin Loftus perform an experiment with spiders; teen volunteers Claire Roess and Julia Sizek display a water experiment.



Gross Anatomy

The Mad Scientists' Lab and Weird Science Halloween Party

Jennifer Sommer



Hard-pressed to do something unique at your Halloween party? This Mad Scientists' Lab program is guaranteed to bring in the kids. The Weird Science Halloween Party is designed as an alternative to the traditional Halloween party, and while it retains the eerie, creepy, and spooky element kids like so much about Halloween, it has none of the controversy that might upset parents. And it's educational because it includes science experiments.

My inspiration came from two places. In 2002, I attended the summer reading workshop in Ohio and was fascinated by state librarian Jay Burton's science experiments.

Then, in the October 2002 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*, I saw an adorable mad scientist costume with an edible experiment recipe displayed next to it. It suddenly hit me how I could use those science experiments! I would plan a Halloween party centered around science.

I envisioned the five members of the children's department at my library dressing in lab coats and presenting different experiments at separate lab stations. Each station also would have relevant charts, definitions, or explanations pertaining to the experiment. We would present ourselves as mad scientists and decorate the meeting room to look like a scientist's laboratory. I bought a "Warning: Mad Scientist at Work" decal, enlarged it, and made copies for each lab station.

To complete the look, I glued plastic lizards on my lab coat, hung a bag of squishy eyeballs from a buttonhole, and placed plastic test tubes around my neck. I even stored some safety glasses in my pocket.

I planned an alien autopsy and searched for some kid-friendly science experiments.

The Experiments

Here are the experiments we performed the first year:

Egg and Bottle Trick

1. Hard-boil an egg and remove the shell.
2. Get a glass bottle with an opening smaller than the egg (we used Frappucino bottles). Show the kids how the egg will not fit into the bottle. Then remove the egg.

3. Boil some water and pour it into the bottle. Let it sit for a minute or two, and then pour out the water.
4. Place the egg back on the opening of the bottle. The warmed air created by the hot water inside the bottle will literally suck the egg into the bottle. It may take some time.
5. Once the egg is inside the bottle, pour hot water on the outside of the bottle and tilt the bottle upside down for the egg to come back out unharmed.

Exploding Bottle Trick

1. Wet some tissue and jam it into the end of an empty two-liter soda bottle to form a cork. Set the cork aside.
2. Put one cup of vinegar in the soda bottle.
3. Wrap one teaspoon of baking soda in a tissue, making a little rolled packet of baking soda (putting it in the tissue delays the action, allowing time to place the cork on the bottle).
4. Drop the baking soda packet into the vinegar, and quickly place the tissue cork in the top of the bottle. You may need to practice this and make sure the cork fits tightly.
5. If all goes well, the carbon dioxide gas created by the vinegar and baking soda will build up enough pressure to pop the tissue cork out of the bottle. This is guaranteed to create some excitement.

Acids and Bases Experiment

1. Prior to the program, boil a red cabbage in a large pot of water until the water is a dark purple.



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2. Pour the purple liquid into a pitcher until it is half full. Fill the rest of the pitcher with distilled water so the water is a medium shade of purple.
3. Pour the purple liquid into several clear plastic cups. At this lab station, have the cups set up along with several household liquids, such as Sprite, lemon juice, pickle juice, and bleach. Tell the kids that this purple liquid can tell if something is an acid or a base.
4. Pour a small amount of each item into a cup of purple water. If the liquid is an acid, the water will turn pink. If it's a base, it will turn blue.
5. Try mixing different combinations and see what happens. If you put lemon juice in, the water will turn pink. Then put in some baking soda, and it will turn purple again. Add some more baking soda, and it will turn blue. Have the kids guess what will happen.

Slime Station

This also doubled as a party favor the kids could take home with them:

1. Each child received a plastic container (we bought containers and lids in bulk; one hundred cost \$11.50).
2. Mix an equal part of white glue and water with a bit of borax (found in the grocery store with the bleaches) mixed in it.
3. Add a few drops of food coloring and stir, stir, stir. The glue and water molecules combine to make slime.

The Edible Alien Autopsy

As you can imagine, the alien autopsy is the big draw to the program. Here is everything you need to know:

1. The alien body is made using boxes, newspaper, and masking tape. Shape it any way you like, as big or as small as you'd like. Ours had claw hands and feet.



Jennifer Sommer performs an autopsy while Heather Brooks looks on.

2. Place a paper towel roll in an arm or leg, and place the ligaments (Twizzlers licorice strips) inside.
3. Add empty cavities anywhere you'd like to extract something during the autopsy.
4. Lay the alien on a sheet-covered table. Set out surgical implements (turkey baster to draw out blood, a scalpel or X-Acto knife to cut the body, mortars and pestles for crushing and testing body parts, tongs to extract body parts, a tape measure to determine height, and so on).
5. The alien is left hollow so that food samples may be placed underneath.

What's Inside the Alien?

For the head: red velvet cake baked in a football-shaped cake pan

For the heart: Spam or potted meat

For the stomach: leftover cabbage (from the acids and bases experiment)

For the intestines: gelatin with gummy worms

For ligaments: red licorice strips

And for an added touch of realism, make realistic looking blood:

2/3 cup corn syrup

1/3 cup water

5 tablespoons corn starch

3 to 5 teaspoons red food coloring

2 to 3 drops green food coloring

1 drop peppermint extract, if desired

Mix the corn starch thoroughly with the water. Add the corn syrup and mix well. Add three teaspoons of red food coloring. Temper it with a few drops of green food coloring. If the mixture is too light, add an additional teaspoon or two of red food coloring. Add an extra drop of green food coloring if the mixture gets too pink. Add one drop of peppermint extract if you wish to create a fresh, minty blood mixture.

6. Cut the alien open in various spots with your scalpel in front of your audience and show them what is inside. These spots may be retaped and repainted for future use.
7. Ask your audience to assist with the autopsy. Hang a life-size anatomical picture of the human body next to the table.
8. Have the kids measure the alien's height and compare it to a human's. Have them guess what color blood the alien might have before drawing out some of the realistic blood. Have them guess what his last meal was and if he is a vegetarian or a carnivore before cutting into the stomach cavity. Keep track of your observations on a flip chart.
9. The body parts may be passed out to audience members as they are extracted, and the remains may be snacked on following the program. This may sound disgusting, but the kids love it!

Snack Time

Here are some suggestions to make snack time just as spooky as the rest of the program:

1. Let each child take home a test tube filled with candy corn, M&Ms, or other small candy (buy test tubes online in bulk).
2. Serve the Edible Experiment as seen in *Better Homes and Gardens* (Oct. 2002): 286. This slimy green and blue gelatin drink is served in a plastic cup with bubblegum eyeballs on top.
3. Serve the alien head cake and body parts remaining from the autopsy.
4. Get creative! One year, we served a Frankenstein cake. Other treats have included bags o' blood, a watermelon-flavored liquid candy, and alien martinis made of green juice with mini marshmallows.

The Logistics

Our program lasts between one and one-and-a-half hours. The first year, we were set up for eighty kids that we divided into four groups. After going to all the lab stations, they were all gathered for the autopsy as a group finale.

Don't Forget the Extras!

- Make sure you have a display set up with science, experiment, or any other books with "mad scientist" in the title that the kids can check out.
- Cover each lab station table with a white sheet or aluminum foil. I purchased an inexpensive decal that read, "Warning—Mad Scientist at Work." I enlarged it to make signs for each lab station.
- Add relevant items to the lab stations; for example, add a chart showing color results for acids and bases.
- Wear a lab coat and safety goggles. Decorate your lab coat with lizards or eyeballs or test tubes.
- Add glass jars full of eyes, intestines, brains, and so on to your tables. *Woman's Day Specials Halloween Celebrations* (2005) has good suggestions.
- Make an equally enticing advertisement for your program ("Ooze on down . . .").
- We played the video "Underdog: The Mad Scientist Chronicles #2: The Big Dipper" while we waited for kids to show up. There are several videos in "The Mad Scientist Chronicles," but I like this one because it shows the lab more than in the others.

You can alter this depending on how many people you have available to help, how many experiments you want to attempt, and how many attendees you expect.

The program is easily adaptable; we also have limited the attendance to twenty-five kids and done all the activities as one group. You can change the experiments and make it as simple or elaborate as you desire.

We pay for this program with our children's department budget; costs are minimal because experiments are chosen based on supplies already on hand. ☺

Fairy Tale Characters Breathe New Life

A Fantasy Book Club Approach for Tweens

Rita Soltan

Traditional fairy tales hold a nostalgic place in many a tween's literary experience. From the numerous picture book versions of the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault, to the more popular, less literarily faithful Disney films, these stories, more often than not, are an introduction to the realm of fantasy literature for children.

Based on numerous sociological and psychological studies, children between the ages of five and ten are the prime audience of literary fairy tales, concludes well-known fairy tale expert Jack Zipes.¹ Children at this stage of development enjoy these stories for their magical elements, sense of justice, triumphs of good over evil, easily defined characters and plot, and clear-cut themes relatable to their own experiences.

In the elementary years, "the child becomes an intensely moral creature, quite interested in figuring out the reasons of this world," said child psychiatrist Robert Coles.² Fairy tales and their motifs of transformation, magical objects and powers, trickery, and wishes help children identify with their sense of poetic justice and provide a straightforward understanding of right and wrong. Coles asserts that the stories children have heard and read about featuring characters who struggle for the good while contending with the bad—in both adventurous and perilous situations—encourage them to wonder even more about ethical issues.³ As children enter the tween and early teen years, their imaginative consciousness is overcome by their need to socialize, strive for independence, and cope in a realistic world. However, the fantasy in traditional literature serves as a vehicle for young people's growing awareness and a way to communicate some of life's deepest truths.⁴ And for children with limited knowledge of classic fairy tale stories, exposure to this form of literature is all the more important for their overall development.

Over the last few years, the traditional fairy tale has been redefined and retold into a more detailed, more developed fantasy children's and young adult novel. Such authors as Robin McKinley and Donna Jo Napoli have taken the basic flat, stock fairy tale character and constructed complete personalities dealing with both psychological and sociological issues. These

books are set within historical and realistic frameworks, and they maintain a minimal element of the original fantasy.

Making the transition from fairy tale to fantasy requires the development of characters faced with particular situations or concerns who ultimately must rely on their initiatives to solve or work through a conflict. The traditional flat fairy tale protagonist challenged with a problem usually prevails through some sort of magical intervention, whereas the round, well-developed character in a novel displays a level of growth or understanding through the actions, consequences, and progress of the story. These fairy tale-based novels portray dynamic characters whose relationships, thoughts, feelings, endeavors, and behaviors provide the reader a certain amount of intrigue and realism in an unreal world.

Engaging upper elementary and middle school readers in the discussion of themes developed around the basic framework of the classic stories through character analysis and comparison of versions is not only a way to revisit the stories within a new context, but a venue for encouraging critical thinking and interpretive thought. While most will bring their own recollection and prior knowledge of the tales to the club, it is a good idea to begin by reading the version from a time-honored collection, such as that of Joseph Jacobs, the Brothers Grimm, or Charles Perrault.

Choosing a picture book or illustrated conventional retelling also will reintroduce children to the basic story outline, characters, and overall theme. In addition, the attention to the artwork



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will incorporate a visual and aesthetic component to the program. Working with these versions first will give these budding adolescents the opportunity to explore the various characters, points of view, way things turned out for the characters, and why they thought the events happened as they did.

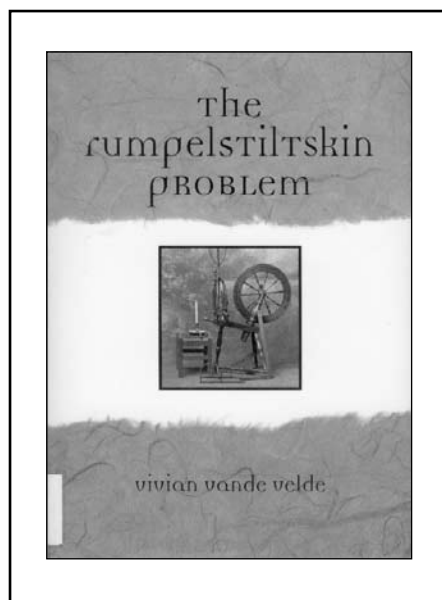
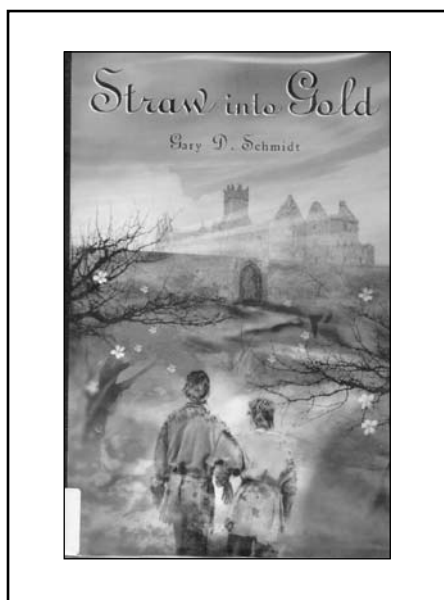
Experiencing the concept of character analysis and the ability to make connections between the various texts are other positive parallel possibilities through discussion. Spreading the discussion sessions for the fairy tale and fantasy novel chosen over a series of two or three meetings will allow for a complete review, appraisal, and interpretive study of all the books chosen for each basic tale.

While schools and after-school centers have built-in audiences for a series of meetings, public libraries can adjust this format in a regular monthly book club program by meeting two or three

ample time (several days or a week to read alone) before returning for the second meeting.

Meeting #2:

1. Discussion might include original language, story outline, and characterization.
2. Comparison with earlier read picture book versions. What do illustrations add to the original story?
3. Introduction of the novel chosen by booktalking the protagonist's concerns, themes presented, setting, or time period author has chosen.
4. Distributing copies of the novel and allowing three to four weeks for reading before reconvening for a third meeting.



times within a six- to eight-week period. Successful fantasy discussion groups can be offered three to four times per year or seasonally with separate registration and publicity.

A typical book club outline for three related meetings might include:

Meeting #1:

1. Reading aloud of one or two picture book or illustrated versions of the traditional fairy tale.
2. Comparing illustration style, language, and author's or illustrator's retelling and interpretation.
3. Introducing information from an annotated collection of classic tales that may offer insight to the originator's telling.
4. Offering the traditional, original telling by presenting copies from an authoritative collection, allowing participants

Meeting #3:

1. The group should be ready to discuss the novel chosen through interpretive questions you have prepared. These should be designed around ideas presented in the novel that lend themselves to analysis rather than evaluation or factual content. You may work from one prevalent question, issue, or concept and then cluster several related questions surrounding the main one. This will allow for varied opinions, none being right or wrong.
2. An evaluation of the novel and its author's development of theme and characters, as well as conflict and resolution, might be included.
3. Comparisons of all versions chosen and authors' and illustrators' renditions.
4. Finally, a new fairy tale may be chosen and introduced for a new round of meetings.

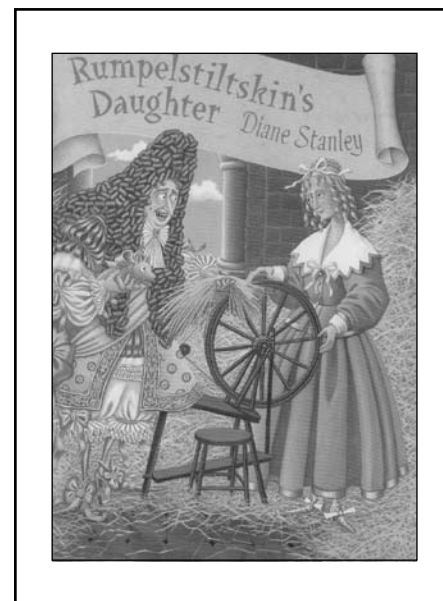
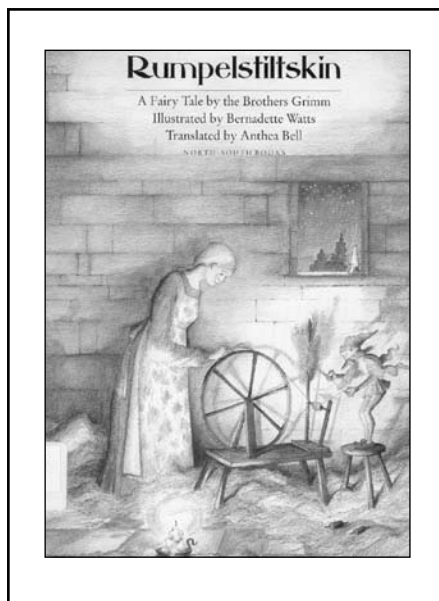
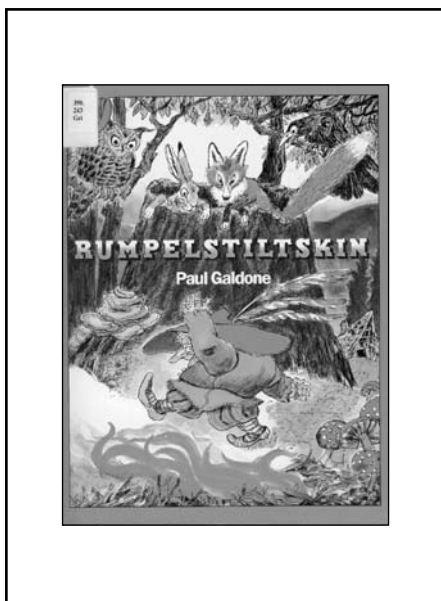
Emerging tweens may be introduced to a fantasy book club with Napoli's novelizations of the traditional *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Frog Prince* in her easily read *Crazy Jack* (Delacorte, 1999) and *The Prince of the Pond* (Dutton, 1992). Two excellent versions of the *Jack and the Beanstalk* traditional story to begin with are Steven Kellogg's 1991 rendition (Morrow) or the 1983 depiction by Lorinda Bryan Cauley (G. P. Putnam's Sons). Kellogg's comically expressive paintings delineate and extend the original story told by Jacobs, while, as he asserts in his author's note, keeping the retelling "faithful to the spirit of Joseph Jacobs's language."⁵

Cauley, with her fanciful, more old-fashioned grainy paintings of an English village, maintains the classic storyline within a more modern parlance. Matt Tavares's newly illustrated ver-

Interestingly, Napoli's Jack behaves in much the same way as the Jack recorded by Benjamin Tabart in *The History of Jack and the Bean-Stalk* (1807), destined to avenge his father's death by the swindling and murderous giant, noted in Tatar's *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*.⁶

Similarly, discussion focusing on *The Prince of the Pond* may begin with two illustrated versions. *The Frog Prince or Iron Henry*, illustrated by Binette Schroeder and translated by Naomi Lewis (North-South Books, 1989), with its evocative, full-page dramatic paintings, is a faithful rendition to the Grimms' original that appeared in *Children's and Household Tales* (1812).

A more comically portrayed, albeit content-accurate, retelling is Edith Tarcov's version illustrated with the signature-style



sion of Edith Nesbit's 1908 retelling of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Candlewick, 2006) offers expressive language mirrored by the animated faces of a gleefully adventurous Jack and a dangerously enraged giant drawn in soft, dark shades of green and brown pencil and watercolors.

A read aloud of one of these versions as an introduction before allowing participants a chance to read over the original story in a Jacobs collection, such as in the 1967 Dover Publications edition *English Fairy Tales*, will help acquaint children to the original narration more easily before moving to Napoli's novel. Here, Jack is portrayed as a son whose obsessive love for a father following his mysterious disappearance into the clouds torments him with guilt. Unable to accept his father's death, and determined to rescue him from an unknown fate, this Jack climbs his beanstalk and discovers a world filled with treasures that turn to normal eggs, beans, stones for building, and an ordinary lyre once he returns to his barren farm. *Crazy Jack*, as he is viewed by his worried mother and his lifelong love, Flora, works through his emotional issues to develop a new existence filled with continued sustenance and sweet companionship.

cartoons of James Marshall (Four Winds, 1974). From these, translations in two excellent collections by either Ralph Manheim or the classically illustrated one by Arthur Rackham, translated by Mrs. Edgar Lucas, can be added to the second meeting of the discussion program.

Finally, Napoli's complete creation of the prince's predicament following his transformation from man to frog brings a totally different perspective to the story, told through amphibious logic. Yet the human aspects of family, love, and loyalty play against the natural behaviors of the frogs and tadpoles that the prince must now interact with in the pond. And, as Tatar also points out, the additional element of transformation and how it is used within the context of how one's feelings can be changed coupled with the symbolic use of animal metamorphosis may also be considered in the discussion.⁷

Rumpelstiltskin, a fairy tale told in many different countries, has been puzzling in terms of the unexplained reasons for the troll's paradoxical actions that both help and threaten the Queen's predicament before and after the birth of her child.

The choices are plentiful for adaptations and recreations of the sprite Rumpelstiltskin, portrayed within a plethora of scenarios, from an evil, wizardly, dwarf-like figure to a caring father figure. The sex of the king and queen's first child is unspecified by the Brothers Grimm, leaving modern-day authors the liberty of building their novels around a chosen gender for the much-coveted offspring.

An adventurous quest well-suited to middle school readers, *Straw into Gold* by Gary D. Schmidt (Clarion, 2001) is played out by two boys—blind and abused Innes and Tousle—who are mystified by the challenge the king has imposed. Tousle is ordered to solve a certain riddle within seven days and either save the lives of a group of rebellious peasant citizens or lose his own. Schmidt adds intrigue and suspenseful excitement with a fatherly, gnome-like character, a banished queen, a persistently perilous chase by the king's henchmen, and the possibility that one of these boys may be the kidnapped prince from a decade ago.

Both novel and tale are developed from a basic question requiring a reasonable explanation for Rumpelstiltskin's interest in becoming involved with the future queen's predicament. Why would he want a baby at all, and why provide chances to end his threat? Both carve out different paths, but maintain the prominent themes of deception, greed, love, and betrayal.

Diane Stanley adds a fresh dimension to the fairy tale with her feminist picture book version, *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Morrow, 1997). She creates a very clever circumstance by allowing her main character, who eventually becomes the greedy king's prime minister, to subversively influence him into providing a means for a sustainable livelihood for his poor subjects. Any of these editions will pair well with traditional retellings, such as those by Paul Galdone (Clarion, 1985), Bernadette Watts (North-South, 1993) or the Caldecott honor-winning Paul O. Zelinsky (Dutton, 1986). Rounding out the discussion for any of the above books with Vivian Vande Velde's *The Rumpelstiltskin Problem* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000) will generate dialogue on character motivation, plot development, and variations of themes explored. Vande Velde's six stories revolve around a sardonic and somewhat disbelieving inquisitive venture into the entire premise behind the original tale.

Novels also have been developed from two familiar legends housed in the folklore section. The recent Newbery Honor book *Whittington* by Alan Armstrong (Random, 2005) is based on the British legend found in the Jacobs collection. Discussion leaders may use the classic adaptation *Whittington and His Cat* (Scribner, 1950) with Marcia Brown's Caldecott Honor linoleum cuts, or the newest rendering, *Dick Whittington and His Cat*, by the late Margaret Hodges (Holiday House, 2006) illustrated with whimsical paintings by Melisande Potter, as an introduction to the legend. Armstrong's novel will serve tween boys and girls equally well as a mixed genre fantasy told within the context of two intertwining realistic subplots, one historical, the other contemporary. Armstrong blends themes, settings, and characters to a richly deep fusion of simple animal and farm life with the wondrous adventures of a medieval heroic benefactor.

The German legend *The Children of Hamelin*, recorded by the Brothers Grimm and popularized in the 1842 Robert Browning poem as *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, has been simply retold by two authors and illustrators. Michele Lemieux (Morrow, 1993) tells a simple version with her brightly colored oil paintings of medieval Germany. The dramatic paintings in Mercer Mayer's more involved edition (Macmillan, 1987) show gruesome scenes of oversized anthropomorphized rats.

Authors Napoli in *Breath* (Atheneum, 2003) and Skurzynski in *What Happened in Hamelin* (Four Winds, 1979) merge plausible science knowledge with the legend's mysterious outcome, creating exciting and adventurous historical fiction. At the center of the story is Napoli's protagonist, Salz, a sickly boy in a world immersed in the superstitious beliefs of witchcraft. Skurzynski creates an orphan named Gast, whose need to escape his serf-like existence fuels his relationship with the powerful piper named Geist.

Skurzynski raises a question of moral and humane behavior as the rats are brutally and viciously killed by the town's children. In both sets of books, an explanation of the difference between fairy tale and legend should be offered, perhaps highlighting a fairy tale's lyrical imaginative style over a legend's historical basis. The subsequent discussion might include the concept of how and why certain events in history are embellished and retold to create legendary figures portrayed as good or evil living under positive or negative circumstances.

Proficient tween fantasy readers of both genders have a choice between two intricately told novel versions of the classic *Beauty and the Beast* tale. McKinley's narrative *Beauty* (HarperCollins, 1978) focuses on the heroine of the story, with two names—Honour, her given name, and Beauty, her nickname. Each name bears certain significance other than the obvious meaning. However, ample opportunity for character analysis is presented through McKinley's first-person narrative describing her heroine's emotional come-around from a homely, plain, fearful girl to one who not only learns to love her Beast for his inner goodness, but also matures into a self-confident young woman.

Correspondingly, an intense, psychological drama is played out in Napoli's *Beast* (Atheneum, 2000), set in ancient Persia. The hero of this story is the ill-fated Prince Orasmyn, transformed by a fairy's punishment and forced to carry out her curse in the body of a lion with the soul and mind of a religious Muslim man. Both novels reflect characterization with attributes of sensitivity, courage, perseverance, and resolve.

Contrasting, comparing, and making text-to-text connections with various versions written originally by Marie LePrince de Beaumont with Hilary Knight's illustrations (Simon & Schuster, 1990), by Charles Perrault in *Perrault's Complete Fairy Tales* (Dodd Mead, 1961), and by Marianna Mayer (Four Winds, 1978) can reflect on how Napoli and McKinley expand the basic theme of the meaning of a person's true beauty through the development of complex, multidimensional personalities.

Comparing artwork of the illustrated editions mentioned above also might indicate interpretations of such beastly visions as Mayer's bear-like rendition versus Knight's almost demonic and devil-like depiction or W. Heath Robinson's earlier pen-and-ink drawings.

The universally portrayed character of Cinderella has been explored throughout the years within a wide variety of cultures. However, two recent novels with the basic thread of the Cinderella theme will bring out a thought-provoking, if not provocative, opportunity for discussion for good readers.

Tatar traces the origin of this tale back to China to a written version from the T'ang Dynasty recorded around 850 A.D. with the principal character named Yeh-hsien.⁸ Introducing this discussion unit with the now classic rendition *Yeh-Shen* by Ai-Ling Louie with Ed Young's exquisitely elegant illustrations (Philomel, 1982) will provide tweens with a literary framework for a story they are most familiar with.

Next, the familiar aspects of the story's text may be connected with that of a European traditional retelling, such as the Ruth Sanders edition (Little, Brown, 2002), which incorporates elements of both the Perrault and Brothers Grimm versions.

A second meeting for this widely read and known story should include the reading and discussing of Tatar's annotated printing found in her edited *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*. Here, information on the interpretation of various magical elements and the printing of a poetic moral following the story will bring out ideas for discussion and analysis. Readers will be able to make numerous connections between versions, including Disney versions.

With such background information, moving into Napoli's historical novel *Bound* (Atheneum, 2004), based on the Chinese story, will bring this group full circle with a strongly developed novel placing the Cinderella protagonist, Xing Xing, in a situation of virtual slavery. Themes of greed, abuse, human rights, freedom, and the meaning of inner beauty through self-worth will surely be issues of interest.

Shifting to a more European rendition, the latest publication by Diane Stanley, *Bella at Midnight* (HarperCollins, 2006), is an intriguing, medieval-set mystery and adventure involving a peasant-raised girl named Bella, her childhood relationship with Prince Julian, and the subsequent discovery of her true lineage. Strong values demonstrating good character traits of honor, loyalty, and responsibility are intricately woven into this richly told historical novel loosely maintaining the magical qualities of the fairy tale.

With the continual reinterpretation of classic fairy tales, upper elementary or middle school readers can glean new insight into traditional literature and develop an appreciation for literature-based book discussion as they watch their old familiar characters come to life in new, innovative, and provocative portrayals. So bring out those fairy tales and start your fantasy book club for tweens. ☺

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A Wild Seuss Chase

Creating the Fantastical Seuss-a-thon

Daniel Meyer

This is the way you would quit smoking if you were Dr. Seuss:

1. Replace your cigarettes with a pipe.
2. Fill the pipe with peat moss.
3. Plant radish seeds.
4. Every time you feel like smoking, water the radishes with an eyedropper.

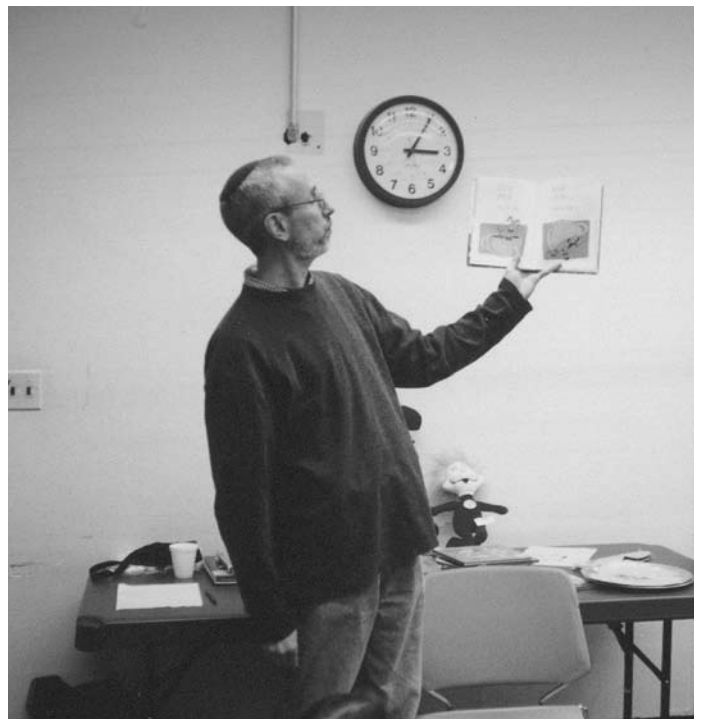
Dr. Seuss stopped smoking in 1981. That his method worked, I think, says a lot about why he became a successful children's author. The story may not be true, but it should be. It seems like a sensible plan.

Here's a story Dr. Seuss told about his working methods:

Sometimes you have luck when you are doodling. I did one day when I was drawing some trees. Then I began drawing elephants. I had a window that was open, and the wind blew the elephant on top of a tree. I looked at it and said, "What do you suppose that elephant is doing there?" The answer was, "He is hatching an egg." Then all I had to do was write a book about it. I have left that window open ever since, but it's never happened again.¹

This story almost certainly isn't true, as he told several contradictory versions throughout his lifetime. But it seems like the best possible reason to write a children's book. I base a lot of the things I do as a children's librarian, and as an occasional writer, on that story. Sometimes random and bizarre things happen. This is where you get your best ideas. Also, sometimes

Daniel Meyer is a Children's Librarian for the Queens (New York) Library System. He thinks it was a wise decision not to write this biography in rhyme.



Author Doug Florian reads at a Seuss-a-thon.

it's good to lie. For example, when kids ask why the computer in the library has stopped working again, I say, "It's possessed by demons." That's more plausible than any technical explanation I could give them, and the kids think it's funny. Some library customers do feel that I'm strange, but they're never surprised that I like Dr. Seuss.

I was in college when Dr. Seuss died. There was a memorial service in one of the largest dorms on campus. Students read their favorite Dr. Seuss books into the evening. People with stubble and Birkenstocks read *Green Eggs and Ham* and cried. It struck me at the time that there was no better way to remember a children's author than to read his books as often as you can. Every year since becoming a children's librarian, I've held a marathon reading of Dr. Seuss stories. I call it the Seuss-a-thon.

This is the way I prepare for the Seuss-a-thon. I wear a tall stovepipe hat with red and white stripes, and I put large, four-fingered gloves on my hands (the people at the costume shop told me they were Mickey Mouse gloves; I ignored them). I choose my favorite Dr. Seuss book (some years it's *The Lorax*; some years it's *Horton Hears a Who!* or *Horton Hatches the Egg*) and practice it again and again. Often, after the program has started, I let the kids wear the hat and the gloves. This is slightly dangerous. Sometimes the kids decide the Cat in the Hat gloves are really boxing gloves.

Everyone who volunteers to read at the Seuss-a-thon chooses a different technique. Some people bring puppets. Some people do funny voices. Some people sing songs written by Dr. Seuss. Some people turn the book into an interactive experience. This is especially popular when people read *Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?* The kids are always looking for an excuse to moo and buzz.

Author Douglas Florian's technique is to read very fast. You might think that would confuse the audience, but Doug has years of experience visiting classrooms and reading his poetry. His Dr. Seuss readings are like Gilbert and Sullivan. It's hard to remember a Seuss-a-thon when someone didn't say, "He's really good," or, "How does he do that?" I was particularly impressed to hear him read *If I Ran the Zoo* and rattle, nimbly, through the Zomba-ma-Tant and Hippo-no-Hungus and Motta-fa-Potta-fa-Pell.

I try to give Doug a big build-up, although sometimes he's too modest to let me go through with it:

"Our next reader is a very famous author . . ."

"No, I'm not."

"Well, he's written forty books."

"More than that now."

"See? You're more famous than anyone else here."

Usually, if I just introduce him as "Our special celebrity guest reader," he lets me get away with it.

Of course, most years at least half the readers are children. This isn't true until the first child has volunteered to read. After that, we have several hours' worth of volunteers. It's important to match the right child to the right book. Usually, the youngest kids want to read the longest stories (I have the same trouble choosing books; his long books are his best, though *Green Eggs and Ham*—written on a bet—contains only fifty distinct words). I find myself saying, "Yeah, this sixty-page book is great, but have you ever seen *Ten Apples Up on Top?*"

Some people are reluctant to participate. One year, I invited a very experienced librarian to read. "Well . . ." she said. "Um . . ." There was a long pause, as though she was about to admit to kidnapping the Lindbergh baby. "I don't really . . . like Dr. Seuss."

"That's OK," I said, trying to sound very comforting. I looked around furtively, to make sure no customers were listening.

"I can't stand *The Rainbow Fish*." We started to wonder if we should form a support group for guilty children's librarians.

I like to research Dr. Seuss's life before the program, so that between readers I can entertain the audience with amusing facts ("Dr. Seuss's local post office hated him. Every year on his birthday, people would send leaky packages of green eggs and Oobleck").

People might think of his books, filled with nonsense words, as an escape from reality. Sometimes, though, reading biographies of Dr. Seuss, I wonder if the opposite is true. In 1953, he and his wife went to Japan and visited with schoolchildren. After spending time in Hiroshima, he wrote *Horton Hears a Who!*, with its refrain, "A person's a person, no matter how small."

His wife's name was Helen. Just after he finished *Horton Hears a Who!*, she was placed in an iron lung. She was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome. He had to help her relearn to button her outfits and use a comb. She had to practice walking and talking.

For years, Helen had taken care of the household chores. He never had to balance a checkbook or make his own coffee. As he helped her recover, he also had to figure out the basics of keeping a house. I don't think it's a coincidence that, after Helen's health returned, he wrote *On Beyond Zebra!*, about learning new letters, a whole new language. They're strange, Dr. Seuss letters such as Yuzz and Vroo, a completely unfamiliar experience. "There are things beyond Z," he wrote, "that most people don't know."

You can even, if you try extraordinarily hard, take *The Foot Book* seriously. He wrote it to cheer Helen up. The disease had paralyzed her, and her feet hurt almost all the time. But the book is also a reminder of how remarkable his talent was. The copyright page, with its capsule description, is funnier than some entire picture books: "Text and pictures tell about many kinds of feet—front feet, back feet, red feet, black feet, slow feet, quick feet, trick feet, sick feet, etc."

The point of the Seuss-a-thon is to read as many of his books as possible, but there are interruptions. Kids get bored sitting in place for too long. Between stories, we play Pin the Green Eggs on the Ham. I'll also pull out *Oh Say Can You Say?*, a book of his tongue twisters. Anyone who makes it through a page or two wins a prize. I also give prizes if kids correctly answer questions from *The Cat's Quizzer* ("Which grows faster? An uncle's eyebrows? Or an uncle's mustache?").

Last year, I started the tradition of the *Green Eggs and Ham* puppet show. The characters include Sam-I-Am and a fox. Very young kids are always the most eager volunteers. It's hard to predict what kind of performer a child will be. One may turn out to be a skilled puppeteer, making up new dialogue for the characters. Another will get shy and just stare, with a bewildered expression, at the fuzzy animal sitting at the end of his or her finger. Both are just as charming.

Dozens and dozens of people show up for the Seuss-a-thon, but most years, when we get to the very end of the event there are

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only a handful of people left in the auditorium. Sometimes, that's my favorite part. I'll say, "Well, I guess that's the end of the program today," and the kids will say, "Can we read more stories?"

A few years ago, there was just one child left in the room, and I read her *Horton Hatches the Egg*. When I got to the section

He heard the men's footsteps!
He turned with a start!
Three rifles were aiming
Right straight at his heart!

she gasped out loud. I thought, "And that's why I became a children's librarian."

The second-to-last page of *Horton Hatches the Egg* may be my favorite passage in all of Dr. Seuss. Horton has gone through every ordeal to keep the egg safe and warm, and it's about to be taken away from him. But at the very last second . . .

"My goodness! *My gracious!*" they shouted. "MY WORD!"
It's something brand new!
IT'S AN ELEPHANT BIRD! . . .

Any adult reading the story knows that's impossible, not because of evolution or physiology, but because there's never a last-minute reprieve when you need one. Life doesn't work like that. But whenever the grown-up in me thinks that way, I come to the next part:

And it should be, it *should* be, it SHOULD be like that!
Because Horton was faithful! He sat and he sat!

I think it's to my credit that I've never cried while reading that page. But I always get a sort of satisfaction that comes only with a children's author such as Dr. Seuss. The lone girl in the auditorium liked that page, too. ☺

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Making Storytime Available to Children of Working Parents

Public Libraries and the Scheduling of Children's Literacy Programs

Sandra Hughes-Hassell, Denise E. Agosto, and Xiaoning Sun

In fall 2005, a student told us the following story. She had called two public libraries in her community looking for a story hour that she or her husband could attend with their three-year-old.

The good news? Both libraries offered programs. The bad news? Both of the programs were at 11 A.M.—one on Tuesday, the other on Wednesday. As both she and her husband worked full-time, it seemed her child would be unable to benefit from either library's program.

The prevalence of families in which both parents work, as well as the increased numbers of families headed by single working parents, led us to suspect that this student's situation was not unique.

According to the 2006 *Kids Count* report, in the United States, 59 percent of "children under six have all available parents in the labor force."¹ While flexible work hours have gained in prominence, much of the American labor force continues to follow the traditional Monday-through-Friday, nine-to-five workday.² As children's librarians know, when children participate in preschool storytimes and other literacy programs, "language development increases, print and phonological awareness grows, and comprehension develops."³

By offering library storytimes and other literacy programs in traditional off-work hours (evenings and weekends), working parents can attend these programs with their children. But just how common is that practice? We undertook this study to determine just that. Here are the questions that guided our research:

1. What percent of public libraries provide storytimes or reading-related programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and families during traditional non-work hours (after 5 P.M. during the week or at any time on weekends)?
2. In communities in which public libraries offer a substantial number of programs during non-work hours, why did the

libraries decide to offer children's programming during evenings and weekends? How popular have the programs been? What factors enable this practice?

3. What alternative methods are public libraries using to address the needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers whose parents or guardians work full-time?

Several decisions shaped our study. First, it was necessary to reduce the possible universe of public libraries to a manageable pool. Recognizing that such factors as staffing levels, funding levels, and hours open have a direct impact on a library's ability to offer programs, we decided to use the top fifty American libraries as identified in Hennen's *American Public Library*

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Denise E. Agosto is an Associate Professor in the College of Information Science and Technology at Drexel University. Her research interests include library services for children and teens, public libraries, and young people's information seeking behaviors. She is currently chairing the ALSC Bechtel Fellowship Committee, and she is the Chair-Elect of ALA's Library Research Round Table (LRRT).

Xiaoning Sun is a doctoral student in Drexel's College of Information Science and Technology. Her main areas of research involve computer-supported collaborative work and human-computer interaction, with an overriding interest in how technologies facilitate and influence human communication.

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Ratings 2005 as our sample, as these are three of the primary factors that contribute to the HAPLR Rankings.⁴

Second, we needed to ascertain if there was a need for programming during non-work hours in each community. To do this, we used the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder to determine the percentage of parents and guardians with children younger than age six in the workforce in each community for the fifty test libraries.⁵ Our assumption was that the greater the percentage of parents or guardians in the workforce, the more likely it was that the libraries in those communities would have noted a shift in community needs and begun to offer evening or weekend storytimes.

The data were collected in three phases.

Phase 1: In November 2005, we visited the Web site for each library and tabulated the number of infant or toddler, preschool, and family programs offered between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M., the typical American workday, in the evening during the work week (after 5 P.M.), and on weekends within the period of one month.⁶ If a library did not provide program schedules on its Web site, we asked the library for scheduling information.

Phase 2: Ten libraries, two from each of the top five largest population categories, were identified as model providers based on the high percentage of programs that they offered during non-work hours.⁷ We then interviewed one librarian in charge of children's programming at each of these ten libraries to ask why they chose to offer off-hour programs, how popular they were, and what factors enabled them to offer children's programs during these times.

Phase 3: The Web sites for each of the fifty libraries were again reviewed to determine if each library was using any methods other than traditional story-based, face-to-face programming to deliver programs to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Research Results

In November 2005, forty-seven of the libraries provided infant or toddler programs, forty-seven offered preschool programs, and thirty-four provided family programs during the nine-to-

five workday (see table 1). During non-work hours, thirty of the libraries provided infant or toddler programs, thirty-three provided preschool programs, and ten provided family programs (see table 2). Viewing the data through this lens, it appears that most libraries in the sample recognize the need to accommodate the schedules of working parents or guardians with infants, toddlers, or preschoolers by offering programs in the evening or on weekends.

However, when viewed as a *percentage of the total number of children's programs offered*, the picture looks quite different (see table 3). In the ten libraries serving more than 500,000 people, 60.5 percent of the parents with children younger than age six are in the workforce; however, only 11.3 percent of infant or toddler programs, 11.8 percent of preschool programs, and 24.3 percent of family programs are offered during non-work hours. Similarly, in the ten libraries serving 250,000 to 499,999 people, 64.5 percent of the parents with children younger than age six are in the workforce, yet only 11 percent of infant or toddler programs, 17.3 percent of preschool programs, and 14.8 percent of family programs are offered during non-work hours.

The percent of programs offered during non-work hours is considerably higher in the communities that serve fewer than 250,000 people (see table 3). More importantly, the percent of programs offered during non-work hours more closely mirrors the percent of working parents. For example, in the 50,000 to 99,999 population category, 55.9 percent of the parents with children younger than age six are in the workforce. To accommodate the needs of these parents, the libraries in these communities provide 46.9 percent of the infant or toddler programs and 42.6 percent of the preschool programs during non-work hours.

Interview Findings

During the second phase, we talked to librarians representing ten of the libraries identified as model providers based on the high percentage of programs offered during non-work hours.⁸ When asked why their libraries decided to offer children's programming in the evening and on weekends, all of the librarians we contacted indicated that the major impetus was a shift in community needs.

Table 1. Number of Libraries Offering Programming for Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers, and Families During Traditional Work Hours

Population Category	No. of Libraries with Infant/Toddler Programs during Work Hours	No. of Libraries with Preschool Programs during Work Hours	No. of Libraries with Family Programs during Work Hours
More than 500,000	10	10	10
250,000-499,999	10	10	8
100,000-249,999	10	10	5
50,000-99,999	9	9	6
25,000-49,999	8	8	5
Total	47	47	34

Table 2. Number of Libraries Offering Programming for Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers, and Families During Non-Work Hours

Population Category	No. of Libraries with Infant/Toddler Programs during Non-Work Hours	No. of Libraries with Preschool Programs during Non-Work Hours	No. of Libraries with Family Programs During Non-Work Hours
More than 500,000	7	8	6
250,000–499,999	5	7	3
100,000–249,999	5	4	0
50,000–99,999	6	8	1
25,000–49,999	7	6	0
Total	30	33	10

Table 3. Percent Programs for Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers, and Parents During Off-Work Hours Compared to Percent Children Under Six with All Parents in the Workforce

Population Category	% Children Younger Than Age Six with All Parents in the Workforce	Infant/Toddler Programs			Preschool Programs			Family Programs		
		Total No.	No. Non-Work	% Non-Work	Total No.	No. Non-Work	% Non-Work	Total No.	No. Non-Work	% Non-Work
More than 500,000	60.5	627	71	11.3	754	89	11.8	379	92	24.3
250,000–499,999	64.5	299	33	11.0	417	72	17.3	128	19	14.8
100,000–249,999	52.2	279	138	49.5	313	62	19.8	111	25	22.5
50,000–99,999	55.9	211	99	46.9	176	75	42.6	46	3	6.5
25,000–49,999	56.0	85	45	52.9	86	31	36.0	14	0	0

As Irene Briggs, public services administrator, Montgomery County (Md.) Public Libraries, explained:

During the 1990s, we began hearing from working parents that they wanted to bring their children to the children's programs but they couldn't due to work. The customer base had changed and we needed to adapt. There were more families in which both parents were in the workforce. There were more single-parent families. Immigrants comprise about twenty-five percent of our population, and they often have to work two to three jobs just to make ends meet. These parents want to bring their children to programs but can't due to their work schedules.

Jennifer Smith, head of children's services, Suffern (N.Y.) Free Library, added:

We try different times for programs based on patron requests, the number of children in the library at various times, and what else is going on in the community. We have more working moms, as well as more fathers, who want to share in the library experience but work during the week.

Margaret McLeod, assistant manager, Parkville-Carney Library (Baltimore County) concurred:

Twenty years ago, we had an occasional evening storytime because some parents commented that they could not bring

their children to daytime events. Although few people came then, nowadays we seem to draw almost as many as we get at our morning storytimes.

If measured just in attendance numbers, the popularity of the programs varies from community to community. Some of the librarians reported that the numbers attending evening and weekend programs do not match their weekday attendance, while others reported numbers as high or higher than their daytime programs.

For example, Crystal Niedzwiadek, programming coordinator for the Hereford Library branch of the Baltimore County (Md.) Public Library, described her evening programs as a "smashing success," with higher attendance than many of the daytime events. In Montgomery County, several of the librarians reported a drop in the numbers of children attending daytime programs and an increase at evening and weekend events.

When measured in terms of community response, evening and weekend programming for children has proven to be a success. As Carolyn Weeks, associate director for central services for the Johnson County (Kans.) Library, explained, "Though attendance is not as high as for most of our daytime programs, many parents who attend express gratitude for the night/weekend option."

McLeod added, "We have been very pleased to see the new faces at our evening storytime. These are people that we would

not have reached if these programs had not been offered.” Briggs shared this success story:

We have a mother at one of our branches who has an autistic daughter. The child is chronologically five or six, but intellectually she is around two. Her mother brings her on a regular basis to the Saturday morning program for families because there is no fixed age level. With mixed-age children, the child does not feel out of place or stand out.

The libraries also have noticed differences in the types of attendees. Many, and in some cases the majority, of the children attending programs offered between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M. are accompanied by a babysitter, grandparent, nanny, or other childcare provider. In the evenings and on weekends, however, the librarians report seeing more parents, especially fathers.

Vicki Fox, children’s services coordinator for the Pikes Peak Library District in Colorado Springs, Colorado, shared this story:

I had one Dad come up to me and say how much he appreciated the chance to do something with his kids in such a family-friendly way. As a divorced father, he has the kids on Saturday and he said he felt so good about bringing them to the library and doing something fun together.

Smith said, “The Saturday attendees are different from the weekday programs in that it is mothers who are working during the week as well as fathers who want to share in the library experience but work during the week.”

McLeod noted that in her branch:

There is very little overlap between the evening and morning storytimes’ attendees. Evening storytimes usually draw parents bringing their children (sometimes two parents per child), while morning storytimes attract children with grandparents, day-care workers, and sometimes nannies, as well as mothers.

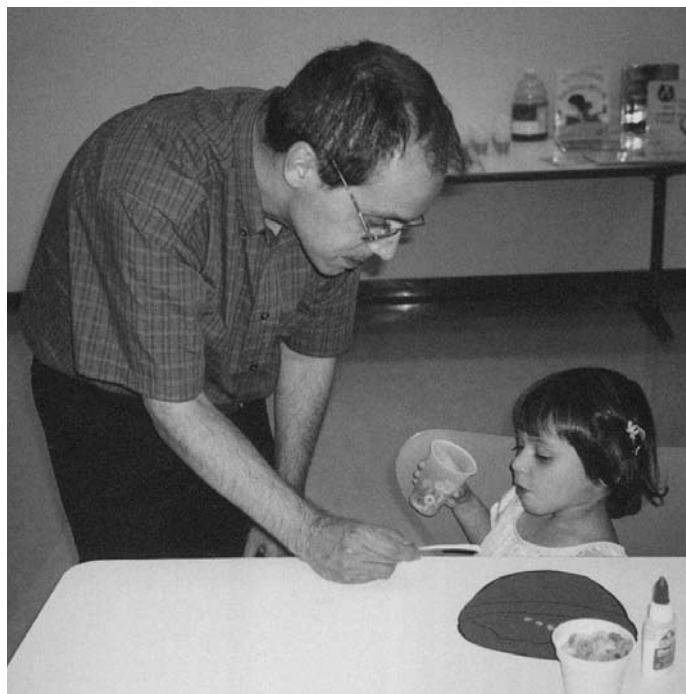
Staffing is, of course, one of the challenges libraries face when providing evening and weekend programs. Three major strategies are used: rearranging the schedules of full-time staff, adding additional staff, and using volunteers or outside presenters. While these solutions may not prove viable in all situations, for the librarians we interviewed, they have worked well.

As Ann McElroy, assistant circulation manager at the Arbutus Library branch of the Baltimore County (Md.) Public Library, explained:

Fortunately, here at the Arbutus Library, programming is viewed as a branch activity. Everyone, from the librarians to the circulation staff to the volunteers, pitches in to help with programming and outreach activities.

Cox added:

The weekend and evening storytimes can occur because we have staff with lots of experience. We share resources as much



Lee Ginsburg shares library time with his daughter, Rachel Agosto-Ginsburg.

as possible because the programs can be time intensive to prepare and present. Staff can pull out a storytime flyer from a past program and use it to revive the program or create a new one.

Niedzwiedek said:

Our staff is highly motivated to promote programming to the community. Our goal is to get families to use *their* library. Therefore, the staff has responded positively to the small adjustments that need to be made to accommodate evening and weekend programs. We have also limited ourselves to one evening storytime per quarter and are working to obtain a “storytime volunteer,” a volunteer program managed by BCPL’s Early Childhood Department, so we can offer more storytimes in the evening.

Alternative Methods of Delivering Literacy Programs

The learners in any program or storytime experience are both the children and the adults who accompany them. Children learn a variety of prereading skills, such as print awareness, letter knowledge, and how to retell a story. They also learn communication and social skills, and they learn to appreciate a wide variety of literary forms. Parents and caregivers learn strategies for sharing literature with their children, activities and tips to support literacy development, ways to select age-appropriate literature, and parenting skills.

Many of the libraries in the sample use alternative methods for delivering some of the above learning outcomes and skills. Figure 1 provides examples of some of the library Web sites that provide early literacy support, as well as a few of the Web sites the libraries recommend.

Dial-a-Story is offered by four of the libraries. This service allows children to hear a story, read by library staff or volunteers, over the phone twenty-four hours a day. Picture books, folk tales, fairy tales, fables, or poems several minutes long are the most common selections. Selections usually change about once a week. Funding for Dial-a-Story is often provided by community organizations and Friends groups.

More than half of the fifty libraries provide links to Web sites that offer stories online, many with interactive components. Some of these sites allow children to hear a story either being read aloud (for example, Storyplace) or told by a storyteller (such as Enoch Pratt Free Library's E-Stories). The Medina County (Ohio) District Library (MCDL) provides its own version called "Tell Me a Story," featuring videos of children's librarians at MCDL reading stories or acting out finger plays. Other sites provide stories or books for parents and caregivers to read aloud to their children (for example, the International Digital Library).

Web pages that provide links to games and activities specifically designed for toddlers and preschoolers are featured on seventeen of the library's Web sites. With such names as "Just for Preschoolers," "Preschool Fun," "Web sites for Tots," and "Web sites for Wee Ones," these pages provide links to such sites as Sesame Street Workshop, Arthur, and Caillou. In addition to providing fun for preschoolers, many of these Web sites help develop prereading skills, such as letter knowledge and phonological awareness.

Thirty-five of the fifty libraries provide specific information about parenting, child development, and literacy for parents and caregivers. Most of the libraries accomplish this by providing links to other Web sites, such as Born to Read or Zero to Three. Some libraries, however, have developed their own Web pages or electronic newsletters to communicate this type of information directly to parents and caregivers.

For example, the Multnomah County (Ore.) Library Web site provides extensive information on child development, early literacy, dialogic reading, and brain development. It also discusses the characteristics of books that appeal to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, provides tips for how to read to each age group, and lists favorite books. For parents or caregivers wanting more information, the library provides links to additional resources, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics Literacy and Reading Promotion Campaign and the National Center for Family Literacy.

Several of the libraries have developed special kits for parents and caregivers of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to borrow. The Baltimore County Public Library, for example, provides Baby Booster Kits—collections of books for use by parents and child care providers. Through Project LEAP (Library's Educational Alternative for Preschoolers), parents and caregivers at the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library can borrow thematic storytime kits, each of which contains eight books; a music cassette or CD; an object such as a toy, puppet, or puzzle; and an activity sheet.

The Allen County (Ind.) Public Library offers PACS (Parent and Child Sets)—number, letter, and imagination kits to check out and take home.

The Monroe County (Ind.) Public Library has developed a preschool exploration center. Housed in a separate room located in the children's department, the center is designed for young children (ages birth to seven) and their caregivers to explore together. Each month, experiential play stations are set up to reflect a theme, such as the farm, colors, or other basic concepts. Within that theme, stations are designed to enhance science, math, art, and early literacy skills. The center is open when the library is open, thus allowing working parents or caregivers to visit with their

Web Site	URL
Allen County Public Library	www.acpl.lib.in.us
American Academy of Pediatrics	www.aap.org
Arthur	http://pbskids.org/Arthur
Baltimore County Public Library	www.bcplonline.org
Born to Read	www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscresources/borntoread
Caillou	http://pbskids.org/caillou
Cuyahoga County Public Library	www.cuyahogalibrary.org
Dial-a-Story	www.dialastory.com
Enoch Pratt Free Library	www.pratt.lib.md.us
International Children's Digital Library	www.icdlbooks.org
Medina County District Library	www.medina.lib.oh.us
Monroe County Public Library	www.monroe.lib.in.us
Multnomah County Library	www.multcolib.org
National Center for Family Literacy	www.familit.org
Sesame Street Workshop	www.sesameworkshop.org
StoryPlace	www.storyplace.org
Zero to Three	www.zerotothree.org

Figure 1. Web Sites that Provide Early Literacy Support

children. The Allen County Public Library provides early learning centers at most of its branches. These centers, designed for toddlers and preschoolers, contain alphabet and number activities.

This study shows that many public libraries in the United States have responded to their communities' changing needs by providing preschool storytimes and other literacy programs in evenings and on weekends to accommodate working parents. Still, there is much room for improvement, as the percentage of preschool programs offered during off-hours is significantly lower than the corresponding percentages of households with all parents in the workforce for these fifty communities. And because the HAPLR rankings identified each of the fifty test libraries as an outstanding public library, with above-average funding, staffing, and operating hours, it is likely that other public libraries are offering even fewer preschool literacy programs during off-hours.

One possibility for mitigating staffing limitations during off-hours is to turn to volunteer assistance, an option that a number of the librarians we interviewed had put into practice. As Cynthia Swanson, librarian with the Baltimore County Public Library, explained:

BCPL has "volunteer storytimers" that help with the evening and Saturday storytimes. We may call in additional part-time help for an after-hours program like our annual Family Fun Night, but we also include volunteers and adjust the full-time schedules (librarians and circulation) as much as possible to account for the time spent doing the program.



David Agosto-Ginsburg works on an art project.

On the other hand, providing off-hours preschool and literacy programs is not the only way for public libraries to extend their services to the children of working parents. The wealth of alternate delivery methods for preschool literacy programs discussed above shows that many public libraries are finding innovative ways to provide literacy lead-ins for children whose parents cannot take them to libraries during traditional programming hours. Such programs as Dial-a-Story, stories online, story videos and kits, Web links to preschool activity Web pages, and outreach to daycare and preschool centers can help these children benefit more fully from public library literacy services and increase the likelihood that they will become lifelong public library users.

Thus, it is not the format of the programs that is important, but the library's willingness to adapt to its community's needs. As Susan Raskin Abrams, supervisor of children's services for the Newton (Mass.) Free Library, said, "Times change. People's needs change. We are always trying to keep up with people's needs." ☺

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6. By "family programs," we mean those that are open to children of all ages and their parents or guardians.
7. We only included librarians from the top five largest population categories in this phase of the study because the number of total storytimes offered in the lower population categories was small.
8. Librarians representing the following libraries were interviewed for this study: Baltimore County (Md.) Public Library; Montgomery County (Md.) Public Libraries; Johnson County (Kans.) Library; Pikes Peak Library District, Colorado Springs, Colorado; Naperville (Ill.) Public Library; St. Joseph County (Ind.) Public Library; Newton (Mass.) Free Library; Geauga County (Ohio) Public Library; Suffern (N.Y.) Free Library; and St. Charles (Ill.) Public Library District.

Jumpstart's Read for the Record Sets a World Record in 2006

Jumpstart Launches 2007 Campaign

One-third of American children enter kindergarten developmentally behind their peers and without the skills necessary to succeed at grade level.

This national school readiness crisis led Jumpstart, a leading education nonprofit, to launch a compelling effort to raise public awareness about the early education gap that exists between income levels. Jumpstart's Read for the Record, which kicked off in May, is a national campaign designed to encourage hundreds of thousands of children and adults to read the same book, *The Story of Ferdinand*, on the same day, September 20, 2007, in support of children everywhere.

In addition to raising awareness about school readiness, the campaign will provide early education resources to adults and raise funds for Jumpstart's work with preschoolers from low-income homes. In the process, Jumpstart hopes to break the world record set in August 2006, when 150,000 people read the same book across the country as part of Jumpstart's Read for the Record inaugural campaign.

During last year's campaign, many California libraries participated in Jumpstart's Read for the Record. Susan Hildreth, California state librarian, led the charge and helped to organize creative events throughout California. She said, "Jumpstart's Read for the Record was a simple, compelling vehicle for us to reach out to our communities and reinforce the importance of early education in a new way."

Stanislaus County

The Stanislaus County Library and Literacy Center organized a countywide event and had readings of the official campaign book, *The Little Engine That Could*, in all of its branches. In addition to library events, the library was able to use its Traveling Tales program and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program site to bring Jumpstart's Read for the Record into classrooms and childcare centers throughout the county.

Modesto served as the main site for Stanislaus County on August 24, pulling out all the stops with a memorable event that lasted from 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. Kandy West, a DJ from the local radio station Kat Country 103, was the first reader, and her radio station came along to do a live broadcast. Later in the day, a surprise guest, Carol Channing, came to Modesto to read *The Little Engine That Could*. Children were treated to free rides on their own Little Engine—the VFW Train. At the end of the day, 2,391 children in Stanislaus County had participated in the event!

National City

At the National City Public Library in San Diego County, the Words on Wheels (WOW) bookmobile made visits to daycare facilities, and the WOW mobile coordinator, Mirna Carrillo, delivered books to Harbison HeadStart, Plaza HeadStart, National City HeadStart, and CDA The Parks.


The main event was held at the National City Public Library and was broadcast on NBC's 11 P.M. news. Librarians read to children and parents while *The Little Engine That Could* was projected onto a large screen so everyone could follow along. After the group reading, children were invited to decorate their own train cars and add them to an eighteen-foot-long mural of a train track. Everyone received a copy of the campaign book, making this a truly memorable event.

Campaign 2007

This year's official campaign book, *The Story of Ferdinand*, can be purchased at Toys "R" Us and American Eagle Outfitters stores, through Hanna Andersson's Web site and retail stores, or online at www.readfortherecord.org beginning on September 5. Because these books have been generously donated by Pearson, Jumpstart will receive 100 percent of the sale of these custom, limited-edition books.

The campaign Web site, www.readfortherecord.org, provides information about hosting and joining reading events across the nation with specific tools and sample activities for libraries.

About Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a national early education organization that works toward the day every child in America enters school prepared to succeed. Through extraordinary attention in yearlong, one-to-one relationships, Jumpstart inspires children to learn, adults to teach, families to get involved, and communities to progress together. Headquartered in Boston, Jumpstart pairs 3,100 trained adults one-to-one with preschool children in need of assistance. During the 2006/2007 program year, Jumpstart will serve nearly 12,000 children in sixty-four communities across nineteen states and the District of Columbia, in partnership with 225 Head Start and other early learning centers across the country. Jumpstart's national sponsors include American Eagle Outfitters, AmeriCorps, Pearson, Sodexo, and Starbucks. Jumpstart received the *Fast Company*/Monitor Social Capitalist Award in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007; it also has been awarded the Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy's Directors Award. For more information, visit the Jumpstart Web site at www.jstart.org. 

Sex and Violence

Is Exposure to Media Content Harmful to Children?

Bowie Kotrla, ALSC Research and Development Committee

The concept that people can be harmed by exposure to various kinds of content is traceable to Plato.¹ The specific category of person, the type of content, and the nature of the harm it may induce vary over intervening centuries and across cultures.²

In the United States, the identification of children as a distinct group particularly vulnerable to putative harmful effects of exposure to certain types of content began in the late nineteenth century.³ In 1968, the Supreme Court held in *Ginsberg v. New York* that material not deemed obscene for adults may nonetheless be considered “obscene with respect to minors.” This doctrine of variable obscenity promoted passage of federal, state, and local laws preventing children’s access to material that is constitutionally protected for adults but regarded as “harmful to minors.”⁴ Ironically, most of the terms describing this issue are ill-defined and variable, including even the definition of “harm.”

Sexually explicit content has been of concern as harmful to minors for more than a century. More recently, materials depicting or including violence, illegal drug use, and other topics have been proposed as harmful to youth. Sex and violence are two of the most frequently mentioned areas of concern, thus are the focus of this article.⁵

What We Know

The research reviewed here refers to the effects of media content, not on media as a vehicle of exposure to other sources of potential harm (for example, sexual predators on the Internet). Most research studies on potential harm to minors are on adolescents rather than younger children. It is noteworthy that a literature review reveals no research on the detrimental effects of book content on youth of any age; all studies were of other media.

Sexually Explicit Material

Although the assumption that children are harmed by exposure to sexually explicit material is well entrenched in the United States, there is very little research to support or refute it.⁶ Of particular concern is accidental exposure to sexual content, especially on the Internet. According to Mitchell, in 2005, 19 percent more ten- to twelve-year-olds and 35 percent more thirteen- to fifteen-year-olds reported encountering unwanted exposure to pornography on the Internet than in 2000.⁷ So we do know that incidents increased, but the authors made no assessment of whether these encounters caused any harm, and fewer than 10 percent of the youth reported these incidents as “distressing.”

Some studies demonstrate an association between amount of exposure to sexually explicit material in mainstream media and differences in adolescents’ attitudes toward sexual behavior.⁸ Adolescents with higher exposure levels have more permissive views of sexual activity before and outside of marriage, are more likely to regard sexual activity as recreational, and have more negative attitudes toward restrictions on sexually oriented materials. Jochen and Valkenburg found that the correla-

Prepared by the 2006–2007 ALSC Research and Development Committee: Eliza Dresang, chair; Gaye Hinchliff; Bowie Kotrla; Barbara Silverman; Rita Smith; Ya-Ling Lu; and Crystal Faris.

tion between attitude and exposure is strongly influenced by male gender and perceived realism of the material.⁹ Collins reported a correlation between adolescents' exposure to television programs containing talk about or depictions of sexual activity and earlier initiation of sexual activity, but others have not discovered any effect on behavior.¹⁰

Violent Material

In children and adolescents, greater exposure to violence in media has been correlated repeatedly to increased aggressive attitudes and behaviors.¹¹ These correlations occur both for passive television and film viewing and for interactive engagement with video and computer games. Almost all studies are of short-term effects only. In the only longitudinal study on childhood exposure to violent content, Huesmann et al. found a correlation between six- to nine-year-olds' viewing of violence on television and aggressive behaviors, including criminal ones, of these same subjects in their early twenties.¹² The perceived realism of the content is a significant factor in promoting aggressive behavior.¹³

Harm of Not Having Access

Although many studies exist on the harmful effect of lack of access to books and reading, they are generally not related to specific content. Recent studies on Internet filtering demonstrate the potential harm of lack of access to specific content, rather than the harm of exposure.

Teachers and students interviewed by Simmons and Sutton, respectively, reported many legitimate educational sites were blocked by school filters, including sites linked to textbooks used in the schools. The inability of students to access assigned content and explore topics that are part of the curriculum was perceived as frustrating and demoralizing, as well as a serious impediment to learning.¹⁴

Richardson et al. found that an average of 24 percent of health information sites were blocked when six Internet filtering products commonly used in schools and libraries were tested at the most restric-

tive setting.¹⁵ They point out the significance of the Internet as a source of health information, especially for lower-income adolescents who are more dependent on libraries for access.

What We Don't Know

A particularly interesting topic about which we don't know is whether or how the content of material printed in books is harmful to minors, as there seems to be no research on it!

We also don't know whether exposure to sexual and violent content causes harm to minors because all the studies are correlational rather than experimental. Correlational research cannot control for the other factors known to be influential in the development of attitudes and behaviors.¹⁶ It cannot demonstrate chronological relationships; for example, we don't know whether violent content promotes violent behavior, or whether violent youth preferentially select violent content and are innately more susceptible to its effects.

What, Then, Can We As Librarians Do?

Through our commitment to children's information literacy, we are active in educating them in critical evaluation of all types of media resources. By providing this instruction, we can help prevent harm to minors through preventing their unquestioning acceptance of content. Thornburgh and Lin make the analogy that while fencing and alarms are useful, the best way to prevent children from drowning in a pool is to provide swimming lessons.¹⁷

We can do some critical evaluation ourselves. We should question claims about this issue and read the evidence for ourselves. Furthermore, we can educate parents, policy-makers, and others about the differences between causality and correlation.

Lastly, we can protect minors' first amendment rights as outlined in ALA Intellectual Freedom policies and take seriously the potential for harm posed by lack of access to information.¹⁸ ↵

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Jumping in Feet First

Six Points for First-Year Managers

ALSC Managing Children's Services Committee

Congratulations new manager—you've found your desk! Now what? You're ready for the hard work, great fun, and tremendous opportunities to provide the best library service to children and their caregivers. But where should you begin?

Regardless of the size of your library, here are six points of advice from current children's services managers to help you get moving in the right direction during your first year as a manager. "It will probably take you about a year to really feel comfortable in your position and understand the responsibilities, the expectations, the staff, and the public you are serving," said Cheryl Kallberg, coordinator of school age services at Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library. "You are sure to make mistakes during this time, and that's fine. Every mistake is a learning opportunity, and you will find you will grow tremendously."

Present Yourself

You'll want to make a good first impression, but finding your place in a new organization and getting your agenda moving can take some finesse:

- Meet with each staff member to begin establishing goals and expectations for the upcoming year. Let them tell you what they have been working on and what projects they would like to undertake in the future.
- Share your vision with your staff as well.
- Observe what is going on around you. Take an active interest not only in your staff, but also in the work of other library personnel, such as maintenance and housekeeping, who work on your area.

- Read the policy manual. There's nothing worse than breaking all the rules in your first month.
- Learn your collection by spending time at the reference desk and walking the stacks. You are also setting a good example for your staff by being visible and available to your patrons.

A new manager can also learn a lot about the department and the needs of the community by talking with the parents and children. Casual conversation can lead to discussions about books, program ideas, and ways to work with local schools. Your enthusiasm and interest will go a long way in making a good first impression.

Acknowledge Your Predecessor

Whether the former manager was a joy or a trial to the staff, that person is part of the workplace climate when you arrive. "I followed a well-loved and respected coordinator when I accepted my current position," said Jennifer Sommer, coordinator of children's services at Wright Memorial Public Library in Dayton, Ohio. "Although I could immediately see some areas that could be improved upon when I arrived, I waited almost a year before enacting any major changes—for example, in our summer reading program. In some ways, I wanted to experience things the way my staff did. I wanted to be able to talk about the problems we experienced and find solutions for them

The ALSC Managing Children's Services Committee includes Kristine M. Casper, Kathy Fredette, Cheryl Kallberg, Ja-Lih Lee, Melanie Lightbody, Susan Pannebaker, Leslie M. Molnar, Bianca Roberts, Jennifer Sommer, and Teresa Walls.

as a group. I thought they would have more of an investment if they were part of the solution.”

- Observe how the department operates before implementing changes.
- Build your work team with an active interest in staff members' suggestions and stories of what has and has not worked in the past.

Learn the Politics of Place

- Even if an organizational chart is available, meet with the director or governing body to understand the channels to follow for budget requests, programming, room reservations, outreach, professional development, and housekeeping and maintenance.
- Partner with another manager whom you can run ideas by and ask for advice on scheduling issues or ordering procedures.
- Learn who the unofficial leaders are in your organization and spend time talking to them.

Handle Issues

- Make certain that staff know to communicate to you any patron issues.
- Support your staff members and share your concerns with them off the public floor and away from the hearing of other employees.
- Listen calmly and respectfully to patron complaints and implement the institution's procedures. While the issue may not be resolved to the patron's or staff member's satisfaction, let them know that they have been heard.
- With personnel issues, include your human resources manager.

Coach Your Staff

- Take advantage of courses and professional journals offered through your

library, and encourage professional development.

- Make certain everyone on your staff knows what to do in any situation (even if it is who to contact when they don't know what to do), be it a burnt-out light bulb, a tornado siren, or an unattended child.
- Staff evaluations should address employees' strengths, areas in which to improve, goals for the upcoming year, and specific ways you will help the employee meet the goals.
- Don't wait for the yearly performance review if you have concerns. It is important to let your staff know how they are doing and give them an opportunity to improve.
- Set high expectations but allow for failure. One of the toughest things for a manager is to allow a staff member to fail. Think of it as tough love. If you continually pick up the slack for a staff member not performing up to your expectations, she will not learn or even realize that she is slacking. You'll be thanked in the long run.

Learn to Delegate

It is important to delegate responsibility to other members of your department. You will not have time to do everything you once did and still construct schedules, maintain budgets, and handle other issues. For some people, learning to delegate is very difficult. One of the hardest things to get used to as a new manager is letting other staff complete projects that may have been near and dear to your heart. But you have to let them.

Explain clearly what you need done, give them a deadline, and follow up with them to make sure that they understand the task.

Be available to offer advice and answer questions; however, let them accomplish the task on their own. They may proceed differently than you, but may still successfully accomplish the task in the end. Sometimes it is hard to step back and watch them make the same mistakes you

already learned from, but they need to learn these lessons as well.

“Waiting for others to accomplish something you already know is a big challenge for managers. Allow your staff to grow and succeed through delegation,” said Ja-Lih Lee of Oakland (Calif.) Public Library. “Give time to coach and advise. You'll really enjoy the result when you see your staff shine in the new projects they successfully complete.”

You will develop your management style as you go. Trust yourself. Admit your mistakes and move on. Be the boss you would want to have. ☺

For Further Reading

Check out these books for additional advice on becoming a first-year manager:

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Manning, Marilyn, and Patricia Haddock. *Leadership Skills for Women: Achieving Impact as a Manager*. Menlo Park: Crisp, 1995.

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New Books

Bolan, Kimberly, and Robert Cullin. *Technology Made Simple: An Improvement Guide for Small and Medium Libraries*.
Fontichiaro, Kristin. *Active Learning through Drama, Podcasting, and Puppetry*.
Tallman, Julie L., and Marilyn Z. Joyce. *Making the Writing and Research Connection with the I-Search Process: A How-To-Do-It Manual*, 2nd ed.
Bielefield, Arlene, and Lawrence Cheeseman. *Technology and Copyright Law: A Guidebook for the Library, Research, and Teaching Professions*, 2nd ed.

Technology and Learning

Junko Yokota, book review editor

Bolan, Kimberly, and Robert Cullin. *Technology Made Simple: An Improvement Guide for Small and Medium Libraries*. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 213p. \$40 (ISBN: 978-0-8389-0920-1).

Do you need technology in your library but don't know where to start or where to



get advice? The authors wrote this guide for non- or semi-technical library workers looking for success in library technology implementation. It offers

many useful tips, such as what constitutes a good “out of order” sign and elements that should be included in a solid Wi-Fi use policy. Organized into logical sections, such as “Assess IT,” “Staff IT,” “Implement IT,” and “Regulate IT,” the guide walks readers through issues they should consider when making library technology choices.

A particularly useful section is “Know IT,” which carefully explains the background workings of core library technologies, from hubs and switches to thin client. The guide also is full of valuable lessons on how to best implement library technology, providing readers with information on how to undertake a needs analysis to computer security policy development.

A series of planning worksheets guide users through many exercises that must take place when carefully planning for technology implementation and integration, including facility assessment, sample request for quotation, license tracking, and hardware and software assessment.

Fontichiaro, Kristin. *Active Learning through Drama, Podcasting, and Puppetry*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 223p. \$35 (ISBN: 978-1-59158-402-5).

What do drama, podcasting, and puppetry have in common? Active learning in the school library media center. This book provides methods for developing a creative learning environment in a school library media center. With a focus on learning academic content through drama, the book's chapters are divided

into different performing arts techniques that can be used in a school library.

Chapters include “Telling and Retelling Stories through Drama: Narrative Pantomime and Circle Drama” and “Drama on the Air: Using Podcasting to Create Radio Plays.” Detailed descriptions of each activity, lesson plans, performance strategies, and grading rubrics also are included.

Fontichiaro, a school library media specialist, gives readers ideas on how to infuse creativity into library lessons. Geared toward K-5, this book can be used for school library



media specialists in K-8. The ideas can really be applied to library media teaching methods in a creative high school environment as well.

Junko Yokota is a professor of education at National-Louis University.

Tallman, Julie I., and Marilyn Z. Joyce. *Making the Writing and Research Connection with the I-Search Process: A How-To-Do-It Manual*, 2nd ed. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2006. 167p. \$55 (ISBN: 978-1-55570-534-3).

The I-Search research process brings the “I” into a student’s research by ensuring that each student has a personal interest in their research topic. Having the research project connect with the student’s own life generates personal interest and is said to result in stronger, better-researched outcomes.



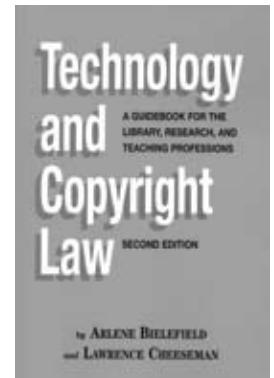
The I-Search process is the center of this book, which guides the reader through the process, beginning with why a school should use I-Search, proceeding to a detailed overview of the process, and then describing how it can be connected to curriculum content areas.

This edition includes a CD-ROM with downloadable worksheets, handouts, and templates. Also, No Child Left Behind federal regulations and advice from librarians’ experiences with the manual’s first edition are added into this edition.

Bielefield, Arlene, and Lawrence Cheeseman. *Technology and Copyright Law: A Guidebook for the Library, Research, and Teaching Professions*, 2nd ed. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2007. 263p. \$65 (ISBN: 978-1-55570-570-1).

With technology constantly changing, librarians must keep up with copyright and its implications on technology-based resources and services. The authors once again join forces to help librarians and teachers understand how library technology is affected by copyright law. This book updates readers on the history of copyright law and its application to technology by including new copyright issues, such as newly formed multilateral copyright treaties and the moral rights of authors. Frequently encountered questions and situations also are offered throughout the book, along with practical answers.

Copyright tools that can be used by librarians, including easy-to-follow guidelines for educational fair use and a new, clear, discussion of special privileges for libraries and archives are also included.



Technology is changing rapidly, and this book provides enough basic copyright information that librarians can use its easy-to-follow index to discern how copyright may apply to new technology issues. For instance, the book does not discuss copyright issues in using Second Life to teach college courses, but the reader can browse through the “Copyright and Distance Education” chapter to learn some of the pertinent copyright issues. By balancing copyright law with real-life advice and working tools, this book is a recommended purchase for all libraries. ☺

Kids! Tool Kit Grows

The following resources have been added to the extensive tool kit of the Kids! @ your library® public awareness campaign:

- Spanish-language resources. The So Much to See. So Much to Do. @ your library® logo is available in Spanish in black and white and color as well as in high- and low-resolution versions. The list of Top Ten Things for Kids to Do @ your library® also has been translated into Spanish. Print-ready public service advertisements in various sizes, scripts for audio public service announcements, and word search puzzles with library themes also are available in Spanish.
- “Top Ten Ways to Use Bill Harley’s *At Your Library Song in Your Library and Community*” provides examples of how libraries can use the upbeat song to grab attention—play the song when classes visit the library, incorporate the song’s short version in morning announcements at school, or air the song during outreach events, such as county fairs, school career days, or family literacy nights, to name a few.



- A story theater script—*The Chicken and the Librarian*—adapted by Dianne de Las Casas and used with her permission, can be downloaded and used for library, school, and community events.

If you are looking for creative ways to use Kids! tool kit materials in your library, or if you are willing to share how your library has already successfully used these materials, visit the Kids! @ your library® Best Practice Wiki at http://wikis.ala.org/alsc/index.php/Kids%21_%40_your_library_Best_Practices_Wiki. It provides a free, open space where librarians can share ideas on how they are using the Kids! resources in their libraries to promote services to children and families.

ALSC encourages libraries large and small to visit the Kids! @ your library® Campaign Web site at www.ala.org/kids and take advantage of the free materials, resources, and ideas.

Wanted! Award Applications

ALSC is seeking nominations and applications for its professional grants and awards:

- **NEW! ALSC/Candlewick Press “Light the Way” Grant.** This one-time grant of \$5,000 will be presented in honor of Newbery Medalist and Geisel Honoree Kate DiCamillo to a library conducting exemplary outreach to underserved populations. The Library Service to Special Population Children and Their Caregivers Committee will select the winner, and may name up to three honorable mentions. Special population children may include those who have learning or physical differences, who speak English as a second language, who are in a non-traditional school environment, who are in non-traditional family settings, or who need accommodation service to meet their needs.
- **Bechtel Fellowship.** Mid-career librarians, with a minimum of eight years experience working with children, are encouraged to apply for a Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship to finance a month of study at the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The \$4,000 fellowship is for travel and living expenses during the period of study. A mentor will be assigned upon request.
- **ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant.** This \$3,000 grant is designed to encourage outstanding summer reading program develop-

ment by providing funding to implement such a program. The applicant must plan and present an outline for a theme-based summer reading program in a public library. The committee encourages proposals with innovative ways to encourage involvement of children with physical or mental disabilities.

- **Distinguished Service Award.** ALSC members are invited to nominate one

of their fellow members to be the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes a member who has made significant contributions to and had an impact on library services to children. Nominees may be practicing librarians in a public or school library, a library or information science educator, a member of the library press, or an editor or other employee of a publishing house. The individual may be active or retired.

Bookapalooza Takes Off in 2007

ALSC's new Bookapalooza program offers three select libraries a collection of materials, including books, videos, audiobooks, and recordings. The materials are primarily for children age birth through fourteen and have been submitted to ALSC award and media evaluation selection committees for award and notables consideration. After each ALA Midwinter Meeting in January, when the awards and notables are announced, these materials, published in the previous year, must be removed from ALSC office shelves to make room for a new year of publications. Your library could become the new home for one of these collections!

The inaugural Bookapalooza collections, consisting of books published in 2006, were awarded in spring 2007 to College Gate Elementary School Library in Anchorage, Alaska; Custer County School District Library in Westcliffe, Colorado; and Creswell (Ore.) Library.

“Our first six boxes of books arrived last week. I alternated between crying and goosebumps ALL day—they are beautiful!” said Gretchen Villers, Custer County School District Library. “Teachers wandered into the library all day long just to look. Needless to say, we are so excited. We thank you so much for ALSC's generous gift to our library. We can hardly wait until next fall so we can start new programs with our students. Your gift was a wonderful way to end our year and brought great energy to our school.”

Applications for 2008 Bookapalooza, featuring books published in 2007, are being accepted through Friday, November 30, 2007. Don't miss this opportunity to transform your library collection. Find out more at www.ala.org/alsc; click on Awards & Scholarships.

The recipient receives \$1,000 and an engraved pin.

- **Maureen Hayes Author/Illustrator Visit Award.** Established with funding from Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, this award pays the honorarium and travel for a visiting author or illustrator, to a maximum amount of \$4,000. Hayes Award applicants seek to provide a visit from an author or illustrator who will speak to children who have not had the opportunity to hear a nationally known author or illustrator.
- **Penguin Young Readers Group Award.** This \$600 award is presented to as many as four children's librarians to enable them to attend the ALA Annual Conference for the first time. The 2008 Annual Conference will be held in Anaheim, California. The recipients must be ALSC members, work directly with children, and have one to ten years of library experience.
- **Tandem Library Books Literature Program Award.** This award provides a grant of \$1,000 to support an ALSC member's attendance at the 2008 Annual Conference in Anaheim, California. The award is given to a children's librarian who has developed and implemented a unique reading or literature program for children (infant through age fourteen) that brings children and books together to develop lifelong reading habits.

For more information and award applications, go to www.ala.org/alsc and click on Awards & Scholarships—Professional Awards. The deadline for all professional award applications is December 3, 2007.

Revised Bylaws in Place

ALSC members voted for the following Bylaws changes on the 2007 spring ballot. Approved replacement text is underlined. Approved text deletions are in brackets.

Article XI. Amendments. Section 2.

[These Bylaws may be amended by a mail vote of the membership when a two-thirds

majority of the votes returned are affirmative.] These Bylaws may be amended by a mail or electronic vote of the membership when a two-thirds majority of the votes returned are affirmative.

Section 3.

[The proposed amendment must be sent to the membership not less than one month before the vote on it shall be taken. It may be sent to the membership by inclusion in an official publication of ALSC, the *American Libraries*, or by direct mail when so authorized by the Board of Directors.] The proposed amendment must be sent to the membership not less than one month before the vote on it shall be taken. It may be sent to the membership by inclusion in an official publication of ALSC, the *American Libraries*, or by direct mail or electronically when so authorized by the Board of Directors.

Article X, Section 2. Nominations and Elections.

[The Nominating Committee shall report its slate of candidates at the Midwinter Meeting of the Board of Directors the year following its appointment.] The Nominating Committee will report the slate of candidates to the ALSC Executive Committee in writing by October 1, for the Fall Division Leadership Meeting in the year of the Nominating Committee's appointment.

Suggestions Welcome

Members are encouraged to suggest titles for ALSC awards. Send recommendations with full bibliographic information to the award committee chair.

- **NEW! The ALSC/Booklist/YALSA Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production** will be given to the producer of the best audiobook produced for children or young adults available in English in the United States.
- The **Newbery Medal** is given to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. Nina Lindsay, nlindsay@oaklandlibrary.org.

- The **Caldecott Medal** is given to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book for children. Karen Breen, kbbreen@gmail.com.
- The **Sibert Medal** is given to the author of the most distinguished informational book for children. Caroline Parr, cparr@crrl.org.
- The **Geisel Medal** is given to the author and illustrator of the most distinguished American book for beginning readers. Cindy Woodruff, cynthiawoodruff@comcast.net.
- The **Pura Belpré Award**, co-sponsored by ALSC and REFORMA, is presented to a Latino or Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth. Rita Pino Vargas, ritapino@netscape.com.
- The **Andrew Carnegie Medal** honors an outstanding video production for children. Wendy Woodfill, wwoodfill@hclib.org.
- The **Mildred L. Batchelder Award** is a citation given to an American publisher for a children's book considered to be the most outstanding of those books originally published in a foreign language in a foreign country, and subsequently translated into English and published in the United States. Fran Ware, lware@comcast.net.
- The **Laura Ingalls Wilder Award** is given in alternate years to an author or illustrator whose books published in the United States, over a period of years, have made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children. The next award is for 2009. Cathryn M. Mercier, cathryn.mercier@simmons.edu.
- The **Arbuthnot Lecture** features a speaker who is an individual of distinction in the field of children's literature. Send recommendations for lecturers for the 2009 lecture to Amy Kellman, akellman@verizon.net.

We also welcome suggestions for the Notable Children's Media lists and the Great Interactive Software for Kids list. Send titles with full bibliographic information to the respective committee chairs:

- **Notable Children's Books**, Caroline Ward, cward@fergusonlibrary.org.
- **Notable Children's Recordings**, Ellen Spring, espring@adelphia.net.
- **Notable Children's Videos**, Kathleen Apuzzo Krasniewicz, kras@perrotlibrary.org.
- **Great Interactive Software for Kids**, Ann Crewdson, crewdson@kcls.org.

New from ALSC/ALA

ALSC is happy to announce the following new publications and resources:

Kids, Know Your Rights! A Young Person's Guide to Intellectual Freedom. Free, downloadable, full-color PDF.

Have you ever tried to explain the concept of "intellectual freedom" to a young person? Not an easy task, but an important one, considering that more than 70 percent of the challenges to books in this country each year take place in schools and school libraries.

Kids, Know Your Rights! A Young Person's Guide to Intellectual Freedom, written by members of ALSC's Intellectual Freedom Committee, speaks directly to kids in grades five and up, using simplified, kid-friendly language to tackle difficult, abstract ideas.

After an introduction that explains intellectual freedom, the brochure forges ahead to discuss challenges to the First Amendment; censorship, how it affects children, and how they can defend their right to read; privacy and confidentiality; and respecting the opinions of others. A bibliography of suggested nonfiction and fiction titles also is included.

The brochure is free to download, print, and distribute at www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscpubs/KidsKnowYourRights.pdf. It is an ideal giveaway for libraries that

Major Board Actions

Electronic Actions

The following actions were voted on electronically by the ALSC board of directors on the electronic discussion list ALSCBOARD. The month in which the vote took place is in parentheses after each item.

VOTED, to fund the Great Interactive Software for Kids Committee's seals and t-shirt special funds application request in the maximum amount of \$800 from the Children's Library Services Endowment, to be applied to the FY07 budget and expended by August 31, 2007. The funds can be used to provide a logo and seal for the committee. (June 2007)

VOTED, to revise the Geisel Award Selection Committee function statement to read: "To select from the books published in the preceding year within the terms, definitions, and criteria governing the awards, the most distinguished American book for beginning readers." (April 2007)

2007 Annual Conference Actions

During the 2007 Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., the board voted to take the following actions:

VOTED, to approve the board meetings agenda for Annual Conference 2007.

VOTED, to approve the 2007 Midwinter board meeting minutes as amended.

VOTED, that ALSC will sponsor up to two candidates for Emerging Leaders 2008.

VOTED, to commit to hosting "up to and only one project" for Emerging Leaders 2008.

VOTED, to revise the policy for service on an award committee to read that "a member may not serve concurrently on the ALSC Board and an ALSC award selection or media evaluation committee."

VOTED, to revise the policy for serving on the Wilder Award Selection Committee to add "ALSC members who are authors and/or illustrators may not be eligible for the Wilder Award during their term of service on the Wilder Award Selection Committee."

VOTED, that the Belpré Award be given annually beginning in 2009.

VOTED, to adopt the Belpré Memorandum of Understanding dated 9/18/06 as amended.

VOTED, to accept the consent agenda.

celebrate Banned Books Week and The September Project.

Home Library Bibliographies. Free, downloadable, full-color brochures.

The Home Library Bibliographies are a project of the ALA-Children's Book

Council (CBC) Joint Committee, with cooperation from ALSC's Quicklists Consulting Committee. They are updates of four previously released brochures for children ages birth to three years, four to seven years, eight to eleven years, and twelve to fourteen years. The brochures are intended for parents, grandparents,

and others interested in building a high-quality library for their children at home.

The selected titles appearing on the brochures are a balance of classics and new books, and were selected by Quicklists from among nearly six hundred submissions from CBC member publishers. Audiobooks are highlighted for the first time on this revised set of brochures.

A Carnegie-Whitney grant from ALA Publishing paid for the brochures' professional, eye-catching design.

This project is a model of collaboration, satisfying one of the three primary goal areas of the ALSC strategic plan.

The brochures are available to download for free on the ALSC and CBC Web sites; we encourage librarians to print them in black and white or color to use with their parent, grandparent, and caregiver patrons. Find the brochures at www.ala.org/homelibrary.

Special Collections in Children's Literature Wikiography. Available online at wikis.ala.org/alsc, scroll down

the page and click on the "Special Collections in Children's Literature Wikiography" link.

The ALSC Committee on National Planning of Special Collections in Children's Literature recently created the Special Collections Wikiography as an easily accessible clearinghouse to provide helpful information about special collections around the country. These collections are typically used by scholarly researchers studying children or their literature.

Currently, the wikiography lists twenty such collections. Among those included are the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, which holds the original manuscripts and illustrations of more than 1,200 authors and illustrators, as well as more than 100,000 published books dating from 1530 to the present; and the Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton (N.J.) University, a major historical collection featuring rare illustrated children's books, manuscripts, original artwork, prints, and educational toys from the fifteenth cen-

tury to the present in more than thirty languages.

"The Special Collections in Children's Literature Wikiography will be a helpful resource for those engaged in scholarly research in children's literature, as well as for those librarians assisting them," says Kathleen T. Horning, immediate past ALSC president. "It's wonderful to see the collective efforts of curators using twenty-first-century technology to provide access to historical archives and collections."

The committee encourages others to contribute bibliographic citations on their collections to the list. With the help of contributing special collections curators, this wikiography can grow as a ready-reference source on children's literature special collections. For those who may be new to wiki technology, the committee has provided helpful, basic instructions on how to add a collection to the wikiography, making it very easy to add to the list. The directions appear at the top of the Web page housing the Wikiography. ☺

Thanks to Our Sponsors

Many thanks to the sponsors of the 2007 ALSC/ASCLA Preconference "The Underserved 20 Percent: Children, Teens, and Adults with Disabilities."

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ALSC Board of Directors

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AUTHOR EVENTS

Author Banquet with Wendelin Van Draanen

Friday, October 26, Fee: \$49

Join us for a special evening with author Wendelin Van Draanen. Her first book was published in 1997, and since then her titles have been nominated for State Award Master Lists all over the country.



Author Breakfast with David Lubar

Sunday, October 28, Fee: \$29

Have breakfast with David Lubar, the author of numerous award-winning and critically acclaimed books for young readers including his book *Hidden Talents*. An ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a top pick on over twenty state reading lists.



Dinner with a Local Librarian

Wednesday, October 24

Join local Nevada librarians on a welcome-to-our-city dinner. Sign-up onsite.

Independent School Section Networking Reception

Thursday, October 25
Fee \$29

Spend the evening getting to know your Independent School Section colleagues during a networking reception. Hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Celebrate Conference

First Timer's Orientation
Thursday, October 25

Is this your first AASL National Conference? Are you a new AASL member? This session is especially designed for new AASL members and first-time attendees to the AASL National Conference.

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Exploratorium

Thursday, October 25

Explore dozens of learning stations that exemplify best practices in school librarianship.

Exhibit Hall Block Party

Thursday, October 25

We're having a party in the exhibit hall and we want you to join us. Don't miss this opportunity to get a first look at the products and services offered by the hundreds of companies who will be on hand.

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AASL Closing Night Gala

Saturday, October 27

Join us for a party in the streets of America's most prestigious automobile collection at the National Automobile Museum, the Harrah Collection.

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Get Your Name in Print

Submit an Article to *Children and Libraries*

Children and Libraries (CAL) is the official publication of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). CAL is a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, and showcases current research and practice relating to library service to children and spotlights significant activities and programs of the association.

Manuscript Consideration

Submit manuscripts that are neither under consideration nor accepted elsewhere. Send an electronic copy of the manuscript by e-mail to the CAL editor. Editor will acknowledge receipt of all manuscripts and send them to at least two referees for evaluation. Accepted manuscripts with timely content will have scheduling priority.

Manuscript Preparation

For information on formatting your manuscript, editorial style, guidelines for text and art, and copyright forms, contact the editor at the address given.

For citations, use endnotes as described in the 15th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, sections 16–17.

Submit manuscripts and text (including references, tables, notes, and bibliographies) to the editor by e-mail as a rich text or Microsoft Word file attachment, copy the text directly into the body of an e-mail message, or send on a CD. Illustrative material (such as high-resolution digital images) MUST be sent via CD. CDs must be PC-formatted.

Full length features (e.g., scholarly, research and “best practice” articles): fifteen to twenty pages, double-spaced.

Short features (e.g., interviews with authors, librarians, or others involved with library service to children): three to ten pages, double-spaced.

The Last Word: 500–750 words, double-spaced.

Long and short features should be well researched with themes relevant and of interest to children’s librarians and all those involved and interested in library service to children.

“The Last Word” is an end-page feature that will run in each issue and highlight brief, light, or humorous essays from children’s librarians, such as: a humorous story about a library experience; a short trivia quiz or puzzle about children’s literature; a brief, creatively written insight on library service, children’s literature, or programming; a very short question-and-answer interview with a popular author; a funny story about what kids are overheard saying in libraries. “The Last Word” will be a place for children’s librarians to share these stories and get their names in print. Please send your ideas or finished stories to the editor.

Attach a cover sheet indicating the title of the article and the full name, title, affiliation, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, and complete mailing address of the first author. Include a 200-word abstract.

Place tables on separate pages. Notations should appear in text for proper table and figure placement (e.g., “insert table 1 here”). Provide a title and caption for each table and figure.

Supply charts and graphs as spreadsheet programs or as graphics (TIFFs or high-resolution JPEGs). Camera-ready copy is also acceptable. You need not provide graphs in final form. If you prefer, you may provide a rough version, or even a sketch. If so, please mark all data points clearly. We will create the graphic. You will have a chance to review the graphic when you review your typeset pages during the proofing stage.

Photos can also be included with manuscript. Color or black and white photos are acceptable. We also can accept digital images of at least 300 dpi resolution. (Pictures from the Web are not of sufficient quality for printed material because their resolution is too low.) Photos will be returned to author(s) after publication.

Submit either Microsoft Word or WordPerfect files. Double-space the entire

manuscript, including quotes and references. Insert two hard returns between paragraphs. Number all pages.

Use a minimal amount of formatting in files. Specialized formatting may be lost in translation from one program to another; mark specialized formatting with text instructions, such as <extract>. Do not use the automatic footnote/endnote feature on your word processing program; create endnotes manually at the end of the article.

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Writing and Bibliographic Style

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THE LAST WORD

Librarian . . . or Prisoner?

Rosemary Chance

Sometimes choosing a career is a matter of only two choices. We could be librarians or . . .

When my son Marc was eight years old, we were traveling from our home in Spring, Texas, to Huntsville, Texas, where I earned a master's degree in library science. That was twenty-six years ago, so I don't remember why we were making the hour-long drive. Perhaps it was to visit Sam Houston State University's Newton Gresham Library, where I spent numerous hours choosing books and articles and reviews for my studies.



Huntsville is known for its university, established as a teachers' college in 1879. It's also known for its prisons; there are five within the city limits. The most famous is the Walls unit in town, a red brick edifice looming up above the street, including intimidating guard towers. It is there that executions are carried out and protestors of the death penalty can sometimes be seen on the news.

It's also where, in 1974, inmate Fred Carrasco held eleven prison workers and four inmates for eleven days in the prison library. Included in that group was Ann Fleming, a new prison librarian and my former teacher of children's literature. (*I wasn't an inmate; she was an instructor at SHSU before being hired as a prison librarian.*) The prison siege is detailed in William T. Harper's book *Eleven Days in Hell*. Thankfully, Ann survived the siege, but not everyone did.

At this point you're feeling depressed and wondering, "Where's the humor?" I'm getting there.

Marc and I are riding along Interstate 45, not talking much. As a child, he listened more than he talked. One time he told me he learned a lot by sitting quietly and listening, mainly to phone conversations when I didn't realize he was nearby.

As we rode along, we could see prisoners in bright white jumpers picking up trash along the highway. Marc had been watching the men for probably ten minutes as they spread out along the highway filling dark green trash bags.

Out of the blue Marc said, "You know, Mom, I think I'd like to be a librarian . . ."

I smiled and was already congratulating myself on being such a great role model for my child. Marc was a prolific and skillful reader, and he wanted to be a librarian, just like me. I was thrilled and proud.

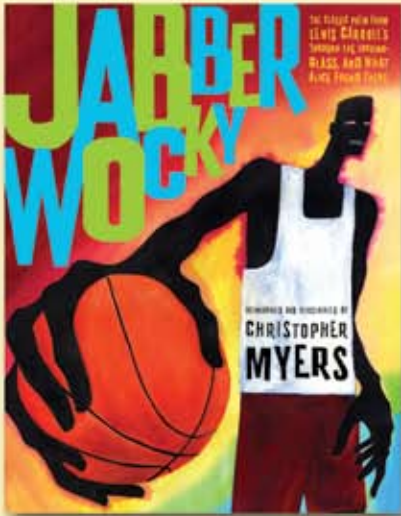
Then Marc continued, ". . . or, one of those men picking up trash."

I'm happy to report that Marc has never been to prison so he hasn't had the opportunity to pick up trash like the men on the highway. He didn't become a librarian either, but being a data analyst is not a bad third choice!

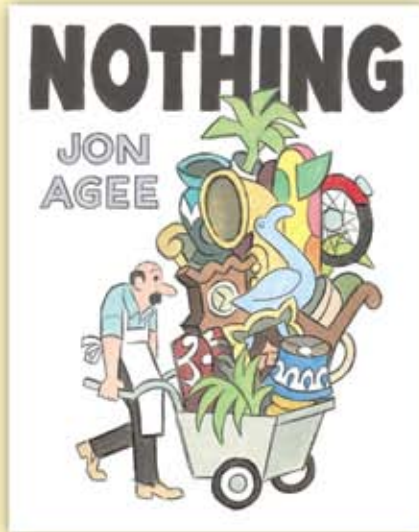
Rosemary Chance is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Library Science at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. She is coauthor of Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books, published by ALA.

Got a great, lighthearted essay? A funny story about children and libraries? Books and babies? Pets and picture books? A not-so-serious look at the world of children's librarianship? Send your Last Word to Sharon Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com.

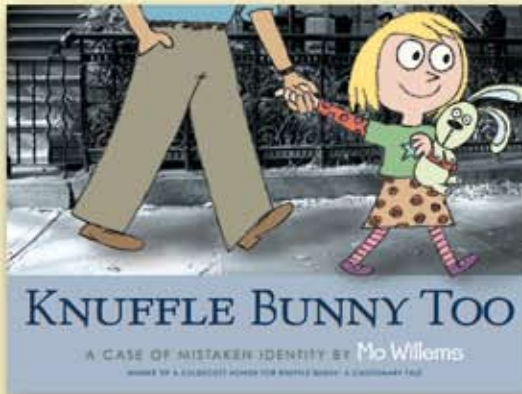
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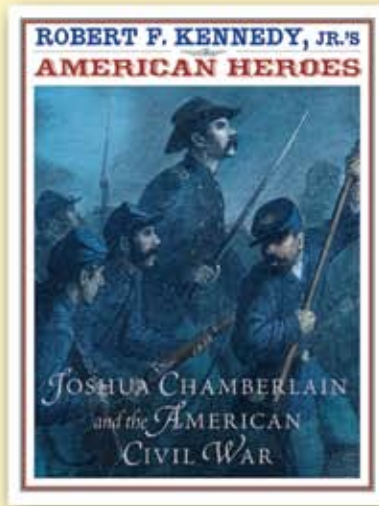
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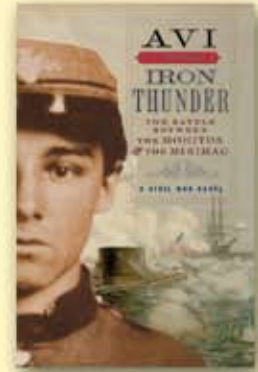


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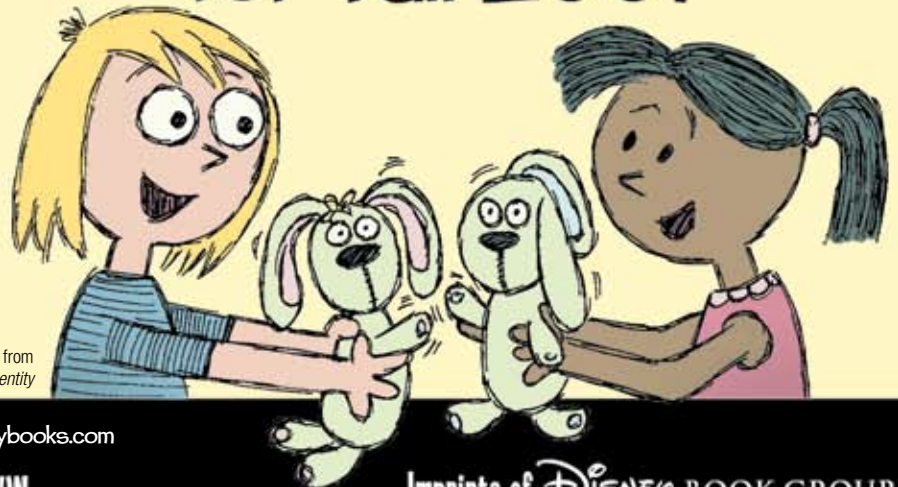


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