

Children & Libraries

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Library Service to Children

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THE AWARDS ISSUE • Autism and Literacy • How Libraries Inspired Eudora Welty

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Cover photo by Paper and Paperless, Chicago



Editor's Note Editorial Role Brings Pride and Goosebumps

Sharon Korbeck

Ever been asked what the greatest part of your job is? Because I'm a person who takes on many roles for personal fulfillment (okay, money isn't bad, either!), I always have a ready answer.

When it comes to editing *Children and Libraries*, my answer is decidedly simple. I simply love books, libraries, and all the people involved in the profession. I especially love compiling our summer/fall issue each year. We put the issue together in early spring, a few months before the ALA Annual Conference. Of course, we all look forward to the conference for one big reason: the Newbery and Caldecott Awards presentations.

As editor of *CAL*, I attended my first awards banquet last year with pride and goosebumps. I was going to meet authors I had long read and revered. There they were, just a few dessert plates away!

It was especially thrilling to hear their speeches because as *CAL* editor, I had already seen the transcripts of their speeches prior to the banquet. How much more exciting can it get?

For those of you who attended the banquet, relive those awe-inspiring speeches in this issue. For those who couldn't attend, read on and enjoy.

Think about the greatest part of your job, and drop me an e-mail. We'll share some of your responses in an upcoming issue of *CAL*. ☺



Executive Director's Note Looking Back and Ahead

Malore I. Brown

As summer wanes and summer reading programs come to a close, now might be a quiet time to reflect on the highlights of the year, including our 2004 medal books and their creators. Within these pages you will find the acceptance speeches from our Newbery, Caldecott, and Belpré medalists. Ursula K. Le Guin's "Cheek by Jowl: Animals in Children's Literature" (p. 20) was the 2004 Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, delivered April 2 in Tempe, Arizona. Also presented in Tempe was Tim Wadham's "Why Fantasy is Cool and Why Ursula K. Le Guin Rules the Roost" (p. 31). Cynthia K. Richey's outgoing President's Message recaps a year of activities and achievements for ALSC. With Gretchen Wronka's incoming President's Message, we look forward to a new year of plans and goals.

Read on to learn more about autism, literacy, and libraries; and training guide dogs. Also, we continue to share profiles of celebrated authors and illustrators with stories on Jane Breskin Zalben, Eudora Welty, and Christopher Bing. Enjoy! ☺

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the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

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Statement of Purpose

Children and Libraries is the official journal of ALSC, a division of the American Library Association. The journal primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, which showcases current scholarly research and practice in library service to children and spotlights significant activities and programs of the Association. (From the journal's draft "Policies and Procedures" document to be adopted by the ALSC board.)

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Professional Development with a Youth Services Focus

Association for Library Service to Children
2004 National Institute
September 30–October 2, 2004
Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis, MN

Featured Speakers

Kate DiCamillo
2004 Newbery Medal author of
The Tale of Despereaux

Kevin Henkes
2004 Newbery Honor author of
Olive's Ocean

ALSC member: \$310 ● ALA member: \$350 ● Nonmember: \$395

For registration information visit ALSC's Web site at
www.ala.org/alsc and click on "Events and Conferences"
or call 1-800-545-2433, ext. 2163



ALSC is a division of the American Library Association

Free Preconference

Thursday, September 30
registration required

Understanding Poverty:
An Overview as it Relates
to Library Service to
Children, their Parents
and Caregivers

All-Day Program Tracks

Friday, October 1

Middle School Readers—
"The Topsy-Turvy
Tween Years"

Outcome Based
Evaluation—
"The ABC's of OBE"

Building Design for
Youth Services—
"Form, Flexibility,
and Function"

Half-Day Workshops

Saturday, October 2

Book Evaluation and
Discussion—with
Capitol Choices™

Every Child Ready
to Read @your library®
The PLA/ALSC Early
Literacy Initiative



Outgoing President's ALSC Message

Cynthia K. Richey
ALSC President, 2003-04
richey@einetwork.net

Moving ALSC Forward

One year ago, as I began my term as ALSC president, I pledged to build on the work of my predecessors and to help promote the activities of ALSC. Although you will have received my official annual report at the Annual Conference in Orlando or on the ALSC Web site, I would like to take this opportunity to review some of the past year's activities and offer some ideas for the future.

A primary goal shared by the elected officers and board members was to further ALSC's strategic plan, specifically promoting ALSC and its good work to the world. In this regard we looked for ways to build on established activities and partnerships, work with other ALA divisions, and reach out to like-minded organizations. We've enjoyed a year of successes with many of our partners. Here is a sampling:

The 21st Century Learner Symposium, cohosted by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Association of Children's Museums, and other organizations, was a tremendous success, and the resulting grants available to attendees for cooperative programs will have a significant impact on youth services across the country.

The launch of the "NASA @ your library" interactive exhibits showcased the connection between

libraries, science education, and technology. As part of this process we learned the importance of looking beyond the obvious for solutions that help our members.

The PLA/ALSC "Every Child Ready to Read @ your library" early literacy project produced much this year: brochures, training materials, and more; participation in the splendid preconference at the PLA Biennial Conference in Seattle, and a determination to expand this important work and create the next steps for success. ALSC also presented a talk table on Family Literacy at PLA's conference and invited PLA participation in the ALSC preconference in Orlando.

We welcomed NEH's invitation to ALSC to create booklists for the We the People project as a way to heighten awareness of ALSC's quality booklists and ensured that ALSC will be more involved in the creation of future lists.

The Pura Belpré medal fundraising task force began work to establish an endowment to support this important award, cosponsored by REFORMA and ALSC.

We expanded the reach of our Friends of ALSC annual appeal by inviting publishers, vendors, and other businesses to participate at corporate levels.

We strengthened relationships with our liaison organizations serving children by creating mutual links to our Web sites. We also began formalizing ALSC's participation in the annual conferences, meetings, or other gatherings of these organizations, at which members can provide programs, participate in panel discussions, promote ALSC activities and publications, and create a direct link to local libraries. We plan to do the same at meetings of state, regional, and local library associations.

We strengthened our partnership with AASL and YALSA, our youth division partners, in several ways:

1. We established a School/Public Library Cooperative Activities Task Force to develop a signature project for the divisions that highlights libraries' activities in this area and creates an online toolkit for schools and public libraries.
2. We participated in ALA's CIPA task force, ensuring that the group considered the concerns of children, teens, and their families. This was also an excellent opportunity to promote the terrific content on our Web sites, e.g., ALSC's Great Web Sites, not only for the public, but also as a testing ground for evaluating filtering software.

3. The three division presidents attended National Library Legislative Day in May as a team. Working with the ALA Washington Office, we spoke to key legislators' staffs, officials from the Department of Education, and the National PTA about national concerns such as No Child Left Behind, literacy efforts spanning birth through teens, LSTA funding, and after-school and homework-help programs. We pledged to have the division presidents make this joint visit an annual event.
4. In addition, the joint youth divisions' legislation committees recruited youth services librarians to talk to legislators about youth services in libraries on National Library Legislative Day, an activity we also plan to perpetuate.

By working with ALA's Public Information Office, we helped keep ALSC and its good work in the public eye. We spoke about children's library services, summer reading programs, early literacy, family reading, Internet access and filtering, award-winning books, Harry Potter, library funding, and more in interviews with news media, such as the Associated Press, *Washington Post*, Scripps Howard Syndicate, and many regional newspapers, CNN, Fox affiliates, National Public Radio, talk radio programs, and others; with magazines such as *Child*; and with other organizations. We were privileged to spread ALSC's message this way.

We've seen progress in many other areas, such as the electronic discussion lists we added (school/public library, collection management, preschool services, managing children's services, and children and technology) as well as in the vital discussions on ALSC-L about the NEH booklist, the Baby Einstein products, and suggestions for program ideas. In addition, our task force on virtual participation prepared an excellent report and will be developing the steps necessary for implementation. The content-rich *ALSCconnect* and *Children and Libraries* also provided opportunities for members to share ideas. In our communications, we continued to position ourselves as the "go-to" place for information on children's library services, books, and reading. We started working on an "ALSC @ your library" campaign to help in that regard.

My term culminated at the Annual Conference in Orlando. I enjoyed celebrating and attending the many programs planned by our members.

Two of my passions, early literacy and responsible, effective use of technology by children, were featured in Orlando. Our pre-conference, *Great Beginnings! Libraries and Early Literacy*, chaired by Nell Colburn, brought together noted literacy champions Mem Fox, Rosemary Wells, Jane Marino, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, as well as a dozen librarians working in the field.

My president's program, *Myths and Realities: Kids and Technology in the Public Library*, presented by Eliza Dresang, Leslie Holt, and Melissa Gross, featured children's use of technology, successful library technology programs, and ways libraries can plan to create their own programs.

Other conference highlights included the ALSC awards presentation for the Batchelder, Carnegie, and Sibert awards and the spectacular Newbery/Caldecott banquet with speeches from winners Kate DiCamillo and Mordicai Gerstein.

I encourage you to check www.ala.org/alsc for resources, handouts, and reports from the programs and meetings. You can see how ALSC works and select those areas in which you would like to volunteer your time and talents.

The future holds opportunities for big initiatives and small activities to further the work of ALSC. We established a task force to develop an award for "visible contributions" to the world of children's library services, books, and reading. We plan to establish programs, activities, and initiatives with other ALA divisions, such as intergenerational programming with RUSA and learning across the spectrum with ACRL. Staff at the University of Arizona have invited ALSC to work with them as they have received a Kellogg Grant to promote "Día de los Niños/Día de los Libros."

Indexing the leadership manual and creating manuals, handbooks, checklists, and the like for all committees, particularly notable, award, and scholarship committees, are small, but critical, activities for the immediate future.

A big activity, our 2004 ALSC Institute, chaired by Caitlin Dixon and planned for September 30–October 2 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, will provide continuing education and source material for our members' work. Featured speakers Kate DiCamillo and Kevin Henkes will highlight the event. Check the ALSC Web site for details and registration information.

I have been deeply honored to serve you these past twelve months, working with you to move ALSC forward. Thank you for your trust in me. Although the presidency is not without its challenges, I have truly loved every minute of it. I could not have served ALSC this year without the help of many people. The remarkable dedication of the elected officers and board members, priority group consultants, committee chairs, and committee members, other members, and the ALSC staff is noteworthy. I offer heartfelt thanks for their splendid work and unflagging support. It has been a pleasure working with all of them.

Our work, however, is not finished; we must ensure that our goals are successfully reached and new goals are set. As past president next year, and for many years far into the future, I look forward to doing more for an association that stands for what I hold dear. ☺

The year is closed, the records made,
The last deed done, the last word said.
The memory alone remains
Of all its joys, its griefs, its gains.
And now with purpose full and clear,
We turn to make another year.

Robert Browning

Cynthia K. Richey is Director at Mount Lebanon Public Library, Pennsylvania.



Incoming President's ALSC Message

Gretchen Wronka
ALSC President, 2004-05
gwronka@hclib.org

ALSC Amazes and Awes

ALSC—the association with a thousand facets! As president-elect, I was catapulted into an in-depth view of our association that continues to amaze and awe me as I move through my presidential year.

Conferences with their meetings and programs are just the tip of the ALSC iceberg. I have observed firsthand that the business of ALSC continues on a daily basis. E-mails from board and committee members, priority group chairs, staff, and other colleagues in the association constantly emphasize ALSC's tremendous vitality and diversity of activity. This work transforms the ALSC mission and strategic plan into action!

I have benefited from the fact that ALSC members are generous with their time and talent. With grace and patience, Barb Genco, Cindy Richey, Malore Brown, the ALSC staff, and many of you eased me through last year and, I hope, will be there this year. The wisdom of long-timers as they mentor less-experienced committee members is always exemplary. It's not a one-way street either.

"[T]his discussion is as good a demonstration as any for why I stay involved in ALSC. People really care. They'll take time to help on anything, and

most are really smart. It's reassuring to see," wrote Priority Group VI consultant Dudley Carlson, responding to a committee's thoughtful online deliberation.

I'm buoyed by generous members across the country who respond enthusiastically and immediately to requests posted on ALSC-L. This virtual camaraderie relieves the isolation felt by many children's librarians who rely on ALSC colleagues they may never meet for advice on best practices. These messages give us all a sense of what's happening in the trenches. In turn, the thoughtful, respectful discussions accessible on the board list give members a view of leadership decision making that previously was not available except to those stalwarts who observed board meetings at conference.

Conference committee meetings, programs, and even hallway conversations energize us. We meet old friends and foster new kindred spirits. We get a sense of ALSC activists' passions and priorities, but we don't always hear from people who can't get to them. For a cameo view of what motivates new members, I made informal cold calls to three of ALSC's newest members prior to writing this article.

Initially a bit startled, but in the fine tradition of children's librarians, they had immediate responses.

"ALSC helps me stay abreast of what's going on in libraries . . . the outside world is beginning to impact us," said Mary Kay Smith at the Safety Harbor Public Library in Safety Harbor, Florida. A children's librarian for fifteen years after making a career change, Mary Kay views ALSC as a united group that can help members face issues like intellectual freedom and the school funding crisis that forces the closing of media centers, leaving public libraries to fill the void. She would like ALSC to take a look at the Lexile Scale Framework for Reading phenomena that's sweeping Florida and other states and come up with a response to reassure parents that every library book doesn't need to be rated. (Sounds like a conference program to me!)

New mother and recent library school grad Sabrena Adams at the Cholla branch of the Phoenix (Ariz.) Public Library, has worked her way up the ranks, starting as a page ten years ago. Like many of us, Sabrena gravitated to children's services because of her "fond memories of my childhood library experience" and her desire to provide the same experience for today's children. "I'd like ALSC to continue to be a voice for children's librar-

ians. . . . It's important for administrators and boards to realize how important children's services are to the community," she emphasized.

Representing the twenty-something generation, Julie Schwartz, Children's Library Associate, Kirkwood (Mo.) Public Library, is heading off to library school this fall. To Julie, joining ALSC was a "good way to get in the game." As a paraprofessional, she's currently helping with collection development and is responsible for presenting the *Books for Babies* programs at Kirkwood.

"There are so many positive things we do as children's librarians. . . . It's so important to work with parents and teachers letting them know the various ways they can develop children's literacy skills from birth. . . . I recently took a community education class on early literacy and realize that children's librarians are as much educators as everybody else!" Julie said.

Because of personal and professional constraints, these three new members are unable to participate actively in ALSC, either as committee members or by attending conferences. Each would like to be more active in the future.

Mary Kay, Sabrena, and Julie are new to ALSC, but their professional goals and passions mirror generations of members' ideals. It would be wonderful to talk with more of you. I suspect such conversations would reveal the same interests and passions that make ALSC's almost four thousand members' commitment to "improving and ensuring the future of the nation through exemplary library service to children, their families, and others who work with children" a reality.

Like most associations today, recruiting new members and retaining current members is an ALSC priority. Better information about what makes ALSC members like Mary Kay, Sabrena, and Julie tick is one way to ensure that the programs and services we develop and promote meet all current and potential members' needs and expectations, leading to critical recruitment and retention.

As ALSC continues the new cycle of strategic planning, the board, staff, and I encourage you to get involved in that process. Updates on the plan will be

available on ALSC-L, in *ALSCconnect*, and in *Children and Libraries*. Follow discussion on the board list. Let us know what you think. Your ALSC membership indicates that you care about this association, so help direct its future with your input. Don't think of this as just adding your two cents' worth. Your suggestions and opinions are much more welcome and valuable than that! ☺

Gretchen Wronka is Youth Services and Outreach Coordinator at Hennepin County (Minn.) Library.



Award Acceptance Speeches

*Delivered at the
American Library Association
Annual Conference
in Orlando, June 2004*

We Do Not Do Battle Alone

Kate DiCamillo

*The Tale of Despereaux: Being the
Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some
Soup, and a Spool of Thread*
Candlewick Press
2004 Newbery Medal Winner

About thirty miles west of Orlando is a small town called Clermont, and in that town is a library called the Cooper Memorial Library. When I was seven years old, the librarian there, a certain Miss Alice, stepped out of her office one day and stood beside me and put her hand on my shoulder and spoke the following words with a great deal of force and volume.

"Kate," Miss Alice said to the person at the circulation desk, "is a True Reader! Therefore, the four-book maximum will be waived for her! She may check out as many books at a time as she likes!"

Miss Alice's hand trembled on my shoulder as she said these words. Or perhaps my shoulder trembled beneath her hand. I cannot say.

All I know for certain is that her words, spoken so passionately, so fiercely, shaped me and helped me define who I was. Who was I? I was a True Reader!

I know, emphatically, that Miss Alice's words are a part of the miracle of my presence here tonight. I also know, emphatically, that it is a miracle that I am here tonight at all.

And, in keeping with the nature of miracles, I am properly awed by it. I cannot explain it. I can, however, joyfully point to the many people who are a part of the miracle: Kara LaReau, my patient and daring editor who read the first seven pages of this book and said exactly the words I needed to hear: "More, please;" everyone at Candlewick Press who believed in my small mouse; Timothy Basil Ering, who brought the mouse to life; my mother, who read to me; my friends, who listened to me. Thank you.

And to the Newbery committee: thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you to each one of you for this miracle. Thank you, all of you, for believing in the power of stories.



Kate DiCamillo

Speaking of stories, I would like to tell you one. I grew up in Florida, but before Florida, until I was five years old, I lived in a house on Linden Lane in Philadelphia. The house was a large mock Tudor, and within it there were two stairways: the front stairs, which were light and bright and grand, adorned with a chandelier and lit further by tall windows above the landing; and the back stairs, which we called the servant stairs. These stairs ran from the kitchen to my brother's bedroom, and they were dark and dismal and full of cobwebs and smelled of mildew and rot.

Also, according to my brother, the servant stairs were inhabited by trolls and witches. Because of this, my brother kept the door in his room that led to the stairs closed. He shoved a chair up against the door. He checked often to make sure the chair stayed in place. But sometimes, on weekend mornings, when he believed that the trolls and witches were sleeping, my brother would pull the chair aside and open the door and run down the servant stairs and emerge, triumphant and out of breath, into the kitchen.

I was four years old at the time of this story. My brother was seven, and we had a father who was a storyteller and a joke teller. Also, our father could laugh like a witch. The sound was terrifying: a high keening, a cackle that was almost, but not quite a scream. The witch's laugh made me shiver. It made my brother's teeth chatter, and this disgusted my father. He considered my brother a coward, and he told him, often, that he was too afraid of too many things. One Saturday, my father said to me, "Let's fix your brother. We'll give him a *real* scare. We'll hide in the servant stairs. And when he runs past us, you grab him, and I'll laugh like a witch."

Now you have to understand: no one knew better than I did how afraid my brother was of those stairs. No one knew better than I how much the witch's laugh terrified him. And the combination of those two things—the dark stairs; the witch's joyful, murderous scream—would, I thought, be enough to kill him.

No one knew better. But this is what I said to my father: "Okay."

I knew that if I said, "Let's not do this; it will scare him too much," my father would say, "Oh, you're just like him. You're a big scaredy-cat, too. What's the matter with you guys? You're no fun."

I wanted my father to think that I was brave. I wanted my father to think that I was fun. And so I said nothing.

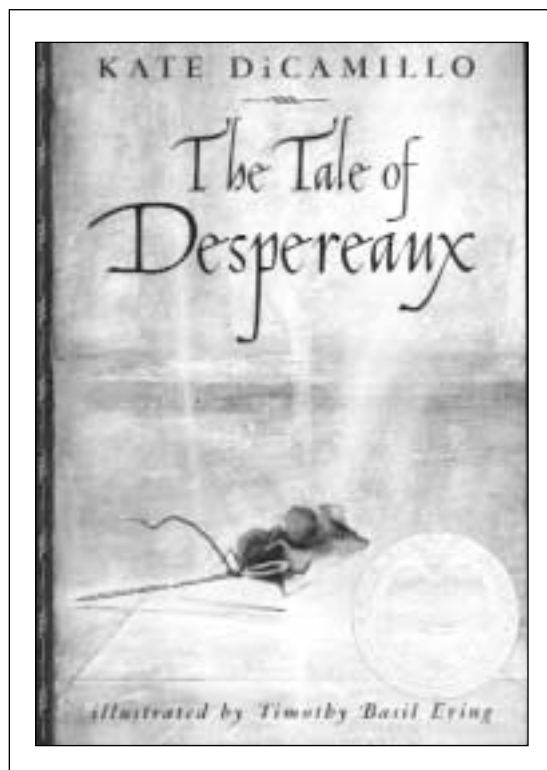
Instead, I stood at the bottom of the servant stairs. I held my father's hand. I listened as, upstairs, my brother moved the chair aside and opened the door. I could have called out to him. I could have warned him. But I said nothing as he descended the stairs toward us.

I was four years old. And I knew that I was committing an act of great treachery.

That's it. That's the whole story. And it's not, I know, much of a story, but I'm telling it here because there are people who believe that stories for children should not have darkness in them. There

are people who believe that children know nothing of darkness. I offer up my own four-year-old heart, full of treachery and deceit and love and longing, as proof to the contrary.

Children's hearts, like our hearts, are complicated. And children need, just as we do, stories that reflect the truth of their own experience of being human. That



The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo,
illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering

truth is this: we all do battle with the darkness that is inside of us and outside of us. Stories that embody this truth offer great comfort because they tell us we do not do battle alone.

When I was five years old, we left the house in Philadelphia, but the stairs in that house stayed inside of me. They were carved in my heart, just as the memory of my treacherous act was imprinted there, shaping the person I became.

In Florida, however, two wonderful things happened. I learned to read. And then, safe within the magical confines of the Cooper Memorial Library, I met people in books who had conflicted, complicated hearts like my own. I met people who fought against their own jealousy, rage,

and fear. And each page that I turned, each story that I read, comforted me deeply.

I have wanted, for a very long time, to tell the story of me and my brother and the servant stairs. But it was not until I sat down to write this speech that I realized I had, unwittingly, told the story already. It's all there in *The Tale of Despereaux*: the dungeon stairs and the castle stairs, the chandelier and the tall windows, the sibling betrayal and the parental perfidy.

Despereaux's story turns out differently than mine, of course. And part of the reason that it does turn out differently is that Despereaux reads, in a book in the library, the story of a brave knight. And at the moment when he must make a difficult decision, the mouse decides to act like that knight. He decides to act courageously in spite of his fear.

This is the other great, good gift of stories that acknowledge the existence of darkness. Yes, the stories say, darkness lies within you, and darkness lies without; but look, you have choices.

You can take action. You can, if you choose, go back into the dungeon of regret and fear. You can, even though there is every reason to despair, choose to hope. You can, in spite of so much hate, choose to love. You can acknowledge the wrong done to you and choose, anyway, to forgive.

You can be very small, as small as a mouse, and choose to act very big: like a knight in shining armor.

But none of these things, none of these shining moments, can happen without first acknowledging the battle that rages in the world and within our own hearts. We cannot act against the darkness until we admit it exists.

Thirty-five years after I stood at the bottom of those stairs and said nothing, I have started to forgive myself for not speaking up. I have begun, too, to forgive my father for what he did, for making me complicit in my brother's suffering.



Because of Winn-Dixie and *The Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo

This forgiveness that I am slowly approaching is the gift of the stories I have struggled to tell as truthfully as I can. And it is the gift, too, of each truthful, complicated, tragic, celebratory story that I have read.

Four years ago, when he was eight years old, my friend Luke Bailey asked me to write the story of an unlikely hero. I was afraid to tell the story he wanted told: afraid because I didn't know what I was doing; afraid because it was unlike anything I had written before; afraid, I guess, because the story was so intent on taking me into the depths of my own heart.

But Luke wanted the story. I had promised him. And so, terrified and unwilling, I wrote *The Tale of Despereaux*.

Recently I had to make a very difficult decision. I had to be brave, but I did not want to be. I had to do the right thing, but I did not want to do it. Late at night, as I lay in bed agonizing over this decision, a friend called me up. She had received a letter from one of her students. The letter was written by a group of third graders at Talmud Torah in St. Paul, Minnesota, who had just finished reading *The Tale of Despereaux*. Each child said in one sentence what they thought of the book. I'd like to read you a few of those sentences:

"You taught us how to do what is right the way Despereaux did."—Chaim

"You inspired me to have courage."—Jonah

"You inspired us to believe in ourselves."—Gabi

And my favorite:

"I think that it was an all-right book."—Ernie

At the exact moment when I needed it, those kids gave me the courage I lacked, the courage they had gotten from a book that I had written even though I was afraid.

And this, finally, is the miracle of stories: together, we readers form a community of unlikely heroes. We are all stumbling through the dark. But when we read, we journey through the dark together. And because we travel together, there is the promise of light.

Einstein said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is."

Tonight, I choose to believe that everything is a miracle. It is a miracle that I am here. It is a miracle every time I find comfort and courage in books. It is a miracle that we can live in this world long enough to learn how to be brave, long enough to learn how to forgive.

I accept this award tonight. I know that I don't deserve it, but I accept it . . . for all of us—True Readers, Unlikely Heroes—in honor of our shared journey toward the light. ☺

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The Importance of Wonder

Mordicai Gerstein

The Man Who Walked between the Towers
Roaring Brook Press
2004 Caldecott Medal Winner

I think that being human is probably the most difficult, incomprehensible, and sometimes seemingly impossible thing in the world. And I believe that all of us who live the lives of human beings every day, bravely, as well as we possibly can with the cards we're dealt, should hear our phones ring one morning and answer them to hear what sounds like thousands of librarians cheering for us, telling us we've won the great prize. This should happen to everyone, as it seems to have happened to me.

I say *seems* because even now, months later, it's still hard to believe that I'm standing here full of gratitude and a feeling that if I were to lift both feet off the ground at the same time, I would not fall.

Disbelief struck me dumb when [Caldecott committee chair] Kathy East called me with the news. When I was finally able to speak, much to my surprise I heard myself say, "I have always loved librarians!"

And it's true. Ever since my first visit to the Wabash Avenue branch of the Los Angeles Public Library when I was four-and-a-half and took home my first book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, by a Doctor named Seuss, I have loved librarians and libraries and books. Books are still one of the greatest of all human inventions. In a book you can hold the imagination of another person in the palm of your hand and explore it at your leisure—true magic. I am very grateful to be part of this magical world of books, and, especially, of books for children.

I am often asked, "How do you write for children? How do you know what they'll like?" I'm always surprised by the question because I'd never given it much

thought. I feel as if I'm being asked, "How do you write for penguins? Or wombats?" The shocking truth is: I myself was once a child. In fact, all of us, without exception, either are children or have been children. Many people seem to forget that children are ourselves as we were and as we are and not a different species. Maybe it's as Wallace Stevens wrote:

There is so little that is close and warm.

It is as if we were never children.

I think being in touch with your childhood keeps you in touch with what really matters to you, and who you really are. My earliest years are still as vivid and important as anything that has happened since. I was surprised to learn that this is not true for everyone. Tragically, many people have had childhoods best forgotten. But essentially, I'm sure I haven't changed much since I was four.

I have a snapshot of myself then, smiling proudly, brush in hand, beside my first easel, on which stands my very first painting—a bowl of flowers. Well more than sixty years later, I am still at it. Same smile.



The Man Who Walked Between the Towers
by Mordicai Gerstein



Mordicai Gerstein

My dear mother Fay, now long gone, cut photos of famous paintings from *Life* magazine and made a scrapbook museum for me, with artists ranging from William Blake and Michelangelo to Picasso and Cézanne. Lying on my belly on the floor, I studied those pictures over and over and over again till they all became part of me. I've found that the books I loved then, I still loved when I later read them to my children; they were still important, still meaningful to me as an adult. *Alice in Wonderland* is almost everything I love in a book: hilarious, scary, full of surprises and bizarre characters, all in a strange and bewildering world. It could be the story of my life. As a child I was interested in almost everything, and as an old man I am interested in absolutely everything. And one of the things that interests me most is that special, overwhelming feeling that I remember first having when I saw the full moon for the first time—wonder.

From wonder into wonder
Existence opens.

So writes poet Witter Bynner in his translation of Lao Tzu.

Remember being a child, and the full moon will always provoke wonder.

The important question for me has not been how to write for children but

how to write *anything*. As a painter, animated-film maker, and illustrator, I came late to writing, and it was in order to make picture books. I am always looking for subjects that puzzle or disturb or amuse me, subjects that make interesting pic-

who bicycles to the moon on a tightrope. My editor told me that it was simply not believable, which surprised me. It seemed quite plausible to me, but I put the story away.

less believable and therefore more truly wonderful!

The text came to me quickly. When Roaring Brook agreed to publish it, I learned that Philippe was about to publish his own book for adults about his walk, *To Reach the Clouds*. I was able to get an advance copy and found that it was a fascinating, hilarious, and moving true account of a young man's years-long obsession and struggle to carry out something beautiful and impossible.

Best of all for me, the book was full of photos and diagrams that were invaluable for making my pictures. The story of Philippe Petit's walk is, for me, one that addresses the question, "What is a human being?" He proposes that we are creatures who can leave fear behind and walk

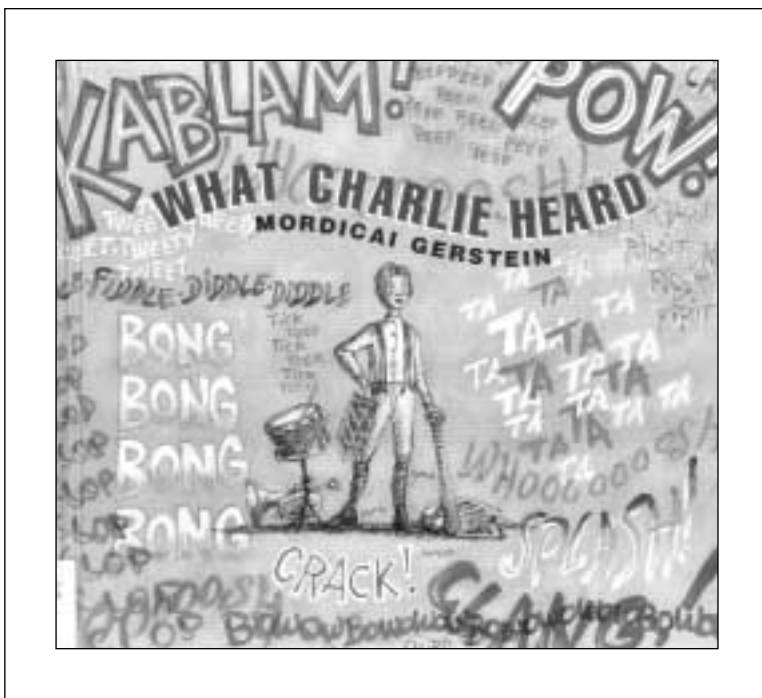
Books are still one of the greatest of all human inventions. In a book you can hold the imagination of another person in the palm of your hand and explore it at your leisure—true magic.

tures. I make books for people, most of whom happen to be children, and I try to address the most essential parts of all of us.

Though I no longer lived in New York City on September 11, and lost no friends or relatives, I experienced the destruction of the Towers in a personal way, as did all

In creating a picture book, I try to make the sentences and pictures as clear and simple as possible. I feel that in the simple and obvious, paradoxically, one can find the utmost complexity and ambiguity. What could be simpler than a soap bubble? And what could be more mysterious and complicated?

My books come from many sources: myths and legends, biographies, and my imagination. *The Man Who Walked between the Towers* came off the streets and out of the sky.



What Charlie Heard by Mordicai Gerstein

In the 1970s I saw a young Frenchman perform on the sidewalks of my New York neighborhood. Philippe Petit was a high-wire walker and unicyclist whose juggling was as witty and full of surprises as Charlie Parker's solos. When I picked up *The New York Times* one day and saw that Philippe had walked a wire between the Towers, I was thrilled to my toes and thought it was one of the most wonderful things anyone had ever done.

Later, in 1987, a *New Yorker* article about Philippe reminded me of his walk, and I started playing with a story about a boy

New Yorkers. I still consider myself a New Yorker, just as I still consider myself a Californian, and now a whatever-you-call-people-from-Massachusetts. The Towers were part of my home, my furniture. Over the years, I'd seen them in different light and weather from different parts of the city. I'd passed them on my morning runs and painted watercolors of them in the evenings. The idea came to me that instead of concocting a fictional parallel to Philippe's walk, I should tell the story of what actually happened; it was

through the air—that life can be exciting and fun and may be lived in learning to do the impossible; that the human imagination has no bounds. For Philippe, the Towers were there for no other reason than to provide two anchors for his wire, just as for a spider the most heroic statue is only a place to spin a web. Entrepreneurial and architectural imagination created the Towers; Philippe's imagination transformed them into his art; and other imaginations destroyed them, showed them to be as ephemeral as Philippe's walk.

Books take us to places we will never go and let us be people and creatures we can never be. I didn't want to just tell the story of the walk—I wanted the book to be the walk between cardboard covers. I think of a picture book as a hand-held theater, entered by opening it and operated by turning its pages (no batteries, you don't have to plug it in); I wanted this book to cause real vertigo, to put the reader, child or adult—and of course myself—on the wire.

I admit there are differences between adults and children, wonderful and often

maddening ones. Children do need adults; I think children make us become the adults they need. We must give them love and nourishment and books, which, as we know, are part of a healthy diet. My intention in all my books is to give children just what I want to give everyone: something beautiful, magical, funny, and soulful; something that provokes good questions—questions about what an incomprehensible, beautiful, and seemingly impossible thing it is to be a human being in this incomprehensible, beautiful, and seemingly impossible world. What could be more difficult and more wonderful?

So here I am, still that child standing proudly and happily beside his easel. I simply have a bit more experience, which hasn't kept me from believing, more than ever, that life should be fun!

And what fun it is, after all the countless hours alone in my studio talking to

myself, to be standing here telling all this to you. I want to first thank the members of the committee, for honoring my book, and then all of you, for listening. My heartfelt thanks to Simon Boughton, my editor and publisher who embraced *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* wholeheartedly, and to Filomena Tuosto, our designer, who helped make the book as effective as it is. My continuing thanks to Joan Raines, my longtime agent, champion, fairy godmother, and friend, who sent the book to Simon, despite my telling her, after two turndowns, to put it away and forget it because I wanted to make books that everyone wanted. Joan, sadly, could not be here today, but she wept like a baby when she heard the news of the award, and that made me cry, too.

My thanks always to my dear wife and love, Susan Yard Harris, and our dear and beautiful daughter, Risa, for their love and support on the crazy, careening, roller-coaster ride that has been my picture

book career. In 1996 Theron Raines, Joan's partner and husband, described my ups-and-downs prophetically. He said, "I wish Mordicai would stop going over Niagara Falls in a barrel and walk across the Grand Canyon on a tightrope!" I've had those words taped over my desk for the past eight years.

My eternal gratitude to Philippe Petit, who is also a marvelous writer, for doing what he did and still continues to do, for all of us.

I feel, thanks to the award, a new sense of freedom, and I see at the horizon of my imagination picture books barely-dreamed-of waiting to be born . . . and I wonder what they'll be. Thank you. ☺

We Need to Understand

Julia Alvarez

Before We Were Free

Knopf

2004 Pura Belpré Medal for Narrative Winner

Recently, a close writer friend asked me, "What is it with you Latinas and thank you? Every Latina writer I read has at least a page of acknowledgments. You're all so polite!"

I thought about this for a while because, of course, she has a point. But what I didn't agree with was what she assumed was the reason for our gratitude. Yes, we are being polite, showing our *buena educación* when we thank our helpers, but I think it's more than good-girl gush. Growing up in extended families, many of us know that for any task, any event, there's always a battalion of relatives (*tías*, especially) marshaled into action. There's *la tía* who makes the best *pastelitos* and *la tía* who sews so well and *la prima* who has a *repostería*. No one does it alone in our cultures.

In fact, no one does it alone anywhere, but we tend to forget that in our North American life where we pay for services. But you can never really pay for service lovingly and passionately done. And so when I look at my little book, *Before We Were Free*, what I see are fine filaments like spider webs connecting it to the people who helped me write it. Every time someone comes up to me and says, my favorite of all the chapters is "Freedom Cry," I think, thank you Andrea [Cascardi, my editor] for finally convincing me that I couldn't just jump from the abrupt close of the diary to the final chapter with snow butterflies. A reader strokes the cover and says, "I really love this picture," and I think, thank you Maury [my big sister] for sending me a postcard with that photo twenty-five years ago when I was really sad in San Francisco and for writing such encouraging words on the back that I kept that postcard in my box of stuff and never threw it out, and thank you Greg McIsaac for storing that box and many other boxes in your basement when I was roaming around the USA as a migrant writer here and there and couldn't have any extras but what would fit inside my little VW. And Erin [Clarke, my



Julia Alvarez

in-house editor at Knopf] for listening to me when I said this had to be the cover because I looked at this photo every day I was writing *Before We Were Free*. On and on it goes. . . .

That's why one of my favorite stories is about an old woman who after many years of reaching up finally touches the sky. Father Sky asks, "How did you get to be so tall?" And she replies, "I am standing on a lot of shoulders."

So, really, I'm being succinct when I fit all my thank-yous on one or two pages at the back of my books.

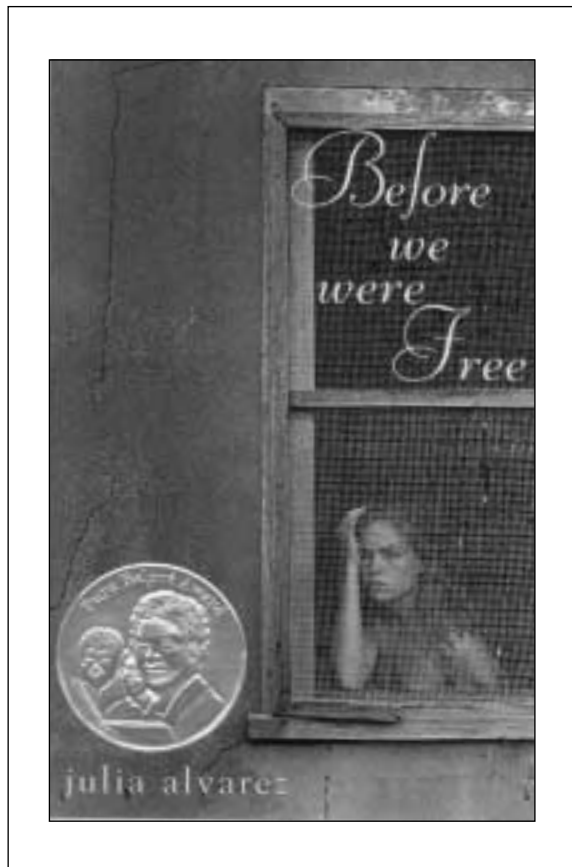
In fact, *Before We Were Free* was born out of gratitude. It is dedicated "to those who stayed." In 1960, when my family escaped from the Dominican Republic to the United States, we left behind cousins, *tías, tíos*, friends and their families, in fact a whole country bearing the brunt of that last brutal year of a thirty-one-year dictatorship. My story, a story of immigration, was the subject of my first novel, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, a novel in which I explored what is lost and what is gained in that translation.

But there was another story, the story of those who stayed and fought for their freedom. In my second novel, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, I told that story, the story of three brave sisters, code name MARIPOSAS, who started the underground movement and whose brutal murder mobilized the country to bring down the dictatorship. Telling their story was a debt of gratitude I owed to them, to *las Mariposas*, and to all the Dominican freedom fighters who gave their lives for the liberation of their country.

You might think, well, you paid your debt of gratitude. Why tell another story about a young girl, Anita, coming of age in that dictatorship? Why write *Before We Were Free*?

About ten years ago, my husband, Bill Eichner, and I became very involved in a *campesino* movement up in the mountains of the Dominican Republic. It's a long story, but briefly we ended up a cooperativo of small farmers and buying up abandoned, eroded farmland, planting trees, and setting up a model sustain-

able farm for the area. As we worked together, we discovered 95 percent illiteracy among our neighbors. So we decided to build a school on the farm to teach literacy, and as more and more adults and children were learning how to read, we needed...you guessed it, a library! Of course, the library was stocked with children's books because that was the reading level of our population. Many of these books were English books in translation.



Before We Were Free by Julia Alvarez

That's how I got started reading a lot of children's books. It was a gift! You see, this was a whole stage of reading I had missed. Growing up in an oral culture in the Dominican Republic, in a family that told stories but was not bookish, I had never read those beloved childhood books my American friends were always talking about: *Charlotte's Web*, *The Secret Garden*, *Mary Poppins*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *Pippi Longstocking*, *Madeline*. . . Of course, the more I read, the more I wanted to write for young readers of all ages. (Actually, that's the term I prefer: books for young readers of all ages because I so dislike the

segregation of books into age-group neighborhoods.)

I started out with a picture book, *The Secret Footprints* (based on a Dominican legend I had heard in childhood but I was reminded of it by my *campesino* neighbors); then, I decided I'd try my hand at a book for middle readers, *How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay*. As I turned my attention to the literature of young adults, I became interested in books with a political content to them. I found many wonderful books on the Holocaust (beginning, of course, with the diary of Anne Frank. She was a big influence on my character, Anita), wonderful books on slavery, on Native Americans, but I found very few titles—and we have a good collection at my local Ilsley library in Middlebury—that addressed what were the "holocausts" on our side of the Atlantic in the second half of the last century. I devoured the ones I found. (Most notably, the wonderful book *The Composition* by Antonio Skármeta and Alfonso Ruano, actually a picture book that captures the feelings of a young boy caught in a dangerous but seemingly normal classroom situation in a dictatorship; also the three books by Frances Temple and *The Honorable Prison* by Lyll Becera de Jenkins—not many, as you can see. I'm talking about ten years back. A list of books I've since discovered follows.)

I wondered about this silence.

In the late 1970s only Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela had freely elected governments, three countries out of a whole half-hemisphere! And most of these dictatorships were put in place and supported by the United States—all the more reason why young Americans should know this dark side of their history. The Czech novelist Milan Kundera says in one of his books that the struggle against power is "the struggle of memory against forgetting." Where was our Latin American Anne Frank, our Harriet Tubman? I wanted to write a story for young readers about a young person growing up in a dictatorship so that young readers could experience that world and remember it. I believe that the

Julia Alvarez Recommends Books for Young Readers

Books about dictatorships in Latin America (in English):

The Composition by Antonio Skármeta and Alfonso Ruano. This is an incredible picture book that captures the feelings of a young boy caught in a dangerous but seemingly normal classroom situation in a dictatorship.

Grab Hands and Run; Taste of Salt; and Two if by Sea by Frances Temple. All three of these novels about young people in dictatorships are affecting and well written.

The Honorable Prison by Lyll Becera de Jenkins. This book is told from the point of view of a daughter of a dissident in a military dictatorship whose family is held hostage in a remote house in the mountains.

Out of War: True Stories from the Front Lines collected by Sara Cameron, in cooperation with Unicef. This is an inspiring volume in the tradition of *testimonio* with stories by young people involved in the Children's Movement for Peace in Colombia.

For Every Child: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child In Words and Pictures, foreword by Desmond Tutu, Penguin 2001—UNICEF

More recent wonderful books:

Flight to Freedom by Ana Veciana-Suarez (New York: Scholastic, 2002)

Behind the Mountains by Edwidge Danticat (New York: Scholastic, 2002)

Red Midnight by Ben Mikaelson (New York: HarperCollins, 2002)

Journey of the Sparrows by Fran Leeper Buss (New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 2002)

Fresh Girl by Jaïra Placide (New York: Random House Children's Books, 2002)

Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan (New York: Scholastic, 2000)

The Weight of All Things by Sandra Benitez (New York: Hyperion, 2001)

Favorite books for young readers (of all ages!):

The Three Questions by Jon Muth

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse

The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants by Ann Brashares

Holes by Louis Sachar

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

Night Flying by Rita Murphy

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck

Hope Was Here by Joan Bauer

Julian books, Ann Cameron

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan

Minnie Maloney and Macaroni by Mark Alan Stamaty

Tell Me Again about the Night I Was Born

by Jamie Lee Curtis

The Wall by Eve Bunting

Books with historical/political basis for young readers:

No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War by Anita Lobel

The Upstairs Room by Johanna Reiss

Summer of My German Soldier by Bette Greene

Journey to America by Sonia Levitin

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

We're Alive and Life Goes On: A Theresienstadt Diary by Eva Roubickova

Letters from Rifka by Karen Hesse

Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

The Night Crossing by Karen Ackerman

After the Holocaust by Howard Greenfeld

Kindertransport by Olga Levy Drucker

To Life by Ruth Minsky Sender

Books about political repression:

The Other Side of Truth by Beverley Naidoo

Where the River Runs: A Portrait of a Refugee Family by Nancy Price Graff

Shadow of the Dragon by Sherry Garland

Who Belongs Here?: An American Story by Margy Burns Knight, Anne Sibley O'Brien

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco

Talking Walls by Margy Burns Knight, illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien

The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee's Story by Pegi Deitz Shea et al.

memory of having been someone else—in other words, the act of reading—can also be a force for peace.

We have a tradition in Latin America of *el testimonio*, the testimony, bearing witness. The first step in the awakening of a people's fight for freedom is bearing witness, telling the story of where we have been in order to know where we are going. I wanted to bring young readers into that world of a dictatorship as seen from the eyes of another young person. I wanted young readers to experience first hand the enormous cost of becoming a free person.

So, you see, this book was born out of gratitude to all those who stayed and fought for freedom. I also had a personal debt to pay. When my family fled the country in 1960, we left behind our newest-friend cousins, our dear *tía* and *tío*. Like Anita's father, my uncle got deeply involved in the plot against the dictator. He was captured by the SIM (the secret police) and spent nine months in the La Victoria (the dictator's infamous prison). He was one of the lucky ones who survived with minimal scars. Years later, after the dictatorship was over, I'd return for visits, and my uncle would take me aside. He had been to Yale as a young man, and so he knew English, but not well enough to write a book. By then, I had become identified as *la escritora* (the writer) in the family. "One day," my uncle would say, "we're going to write a book together. The title is going to be *I Learned More in Jail Than at Yale*." He died before we could undertake this joint project.

But when I sat down to write *Before We Were Free*, I e-mailed his son, my cousin

Where was our Latin American Anne Frank, our Harriet Tubman? I wanted to write a story for young readers about a young person growing up in a dictatorship so that young readers could experience that world and remember it. I believe that the memory of having been someone else—in other words, the act of reading—can also be a force for peace.



How the García Girls Lost Their Accents and In the Name of Salomé by Julia Alvarez

Ique, and I asked what he remembered of those days before his father was captured and afterwards when they lived in fear, not knowing if they would ever see my uncle alive again. Many mornings before starting to write, I'd sit reading his e-mails and sobbing in front of the computer. Some of my uncle's and my cousin's memories found their way into my book. Gracias a todos.

I want to end with one last thank you: I want to thank the Association for Library Service to Children and REFORMA for honoring *Before We Were Free* with the Pura Belpré Medal. By recognizing works that portray, affirm, and celebrate our

rich cultura and historia, you enrich all of us in the family of readers. You promote peace by helping readers become the others we so often ignore.

A Latina should never say "one last thank you!" I have another thank you to deliver—to libraries and librarians. As I mentioned above, you are a peace-working force in the world. John Barlow Martin, the United States ambassador to Dominican Republic right after the Trujillo dictatorship, tells of an incident that happened when he first arrived in the country. He was traveling all over, asking people what kind of help they needed to build democracy. In one small town he visited, a group of teenagers asked him for a library. He was intrigued and went on to ask what books they'd like in the library. After a long pause, a thin quiet boy in a white shirt with large brown eyes said, "Books about Trujillo . . . so we can understand what happened to us."

We need you, libraries and librarians, so we can all understand what happens to all of us in our human family! ☺

My Family Is My *Corazón*

Yuyi Morales

Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book

Chronicle Books

2004 Pura Belpré Medal for Illustration Winner

Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez, written by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Yuyi Morales, was a 2004 Belpré honor book for illustration.



Yuyi Morales

Hace mucho, mucho tiempo . . .

A long, long time ago Conejo, Rabbit, went to live on the moon. He went there for very good reasons—the most important of them being that Coyote was madly looking for him to eat him up.

Oh, how much coyote wanted to eat Conejo! That sly rabbit had fooled him again, this time into drinking all the water from the lake, with the promise that in the middle of the lake, Coyote would find a fat, milky, round cheese wheel. Then Conejo escaped and climbed a ladder all the way to the moon. To this day Coyote still wants to eat Conejo; that is why you

hear him at night looking up and howling at Conejo.

But when I came to live in the United States ten years ago, I heard different rumors. Here people told me that in the moon there lived a man.

Please understand my disconcertment, but ever since I was a child I had seen with my very own eyes that it was a rabbit that lived on the moon. Couldn't everybody see him up there outlined on the face of the full moon? What were people in the United States talking about?

As I come today to celebrate the Pura Belpré Medal in the company of members of the Association for Library Service to Children, members of REFORMA, colleagues, awardees, librarians, teachers, editors, book lovers, friends—many of whom see a man when they look at the moon—I am delighted to announce that I have finally understood that there is room on the moon, and everywhere else for that matter, for more than one tale.

I love old stories, especially my Mexican stories, the ones that I read in my brown paper textbooks at school and the ones that my uncles told at the table moving their hands in ways that hypnotized me, and especially the ones that I heard from my mother and my aunts at night when the electric company had us, once more, in the dark, and we were all burrowed inside blankets. The sole light, that of the candles.

Shaking and popping our eyes, my sisters, cousins, and I heard the stories of apparitions, ghosts, *espantos*, headless horsemen, little people called *chaneques* who loved to get children lost, weeping *lloronas* you could hear outside your window, amazing animals like snakes and *tlaconetes* that came inside the houses to steal the milk from the babies, *brujas* transformed into fireballs rolling down the barren hills, jungles where spells were cast, and haunted *haciendas* with *dinero*, money, buried somewhere in the house.

The most fantastic moments in these tales came as my mother or my aunts declared that all that had either happened to them, to my grandma, or to somebody else in the family. And, yes, they said, it was my own *bisabuelo*, my great-grandfather, who had buried his golden coins somewhere in the house not telling anybody where, and then he died. Mama said his sons and daughters dug all over the house, but it was somebody else, a stranger, who found it when it had already been forgotten.

It is no surprise then that, many years later and one country further away, when I took a class for illustrating children's books, and our instructor—now my friend and mentor—Ashley Wolf gave her first assignment—to come up with a concept story, alphabet, or counting book to illustrate—I arrived at the next class with the text and some drawings for a counting book about a grandmother who celebrates her birthday in the company of her grandchildren and a guest that just so happens to be . . . well, dead.

I might not need to explain to you that my book idea didn't find a lot of takers along the way. Death is a delicate subject, some said, and my book was scary.

When I was a child, I was often scared. Not of *espanto*—OK, perhaps only a little; instead, many nights I went to bed convinced that UFOs were landing on the roof of our house while mama and papa were out at the movies. On those nights I lie awake believing that the day had come when aliens from outer space had arrived to take me. I am still waiting, I guess.

Like many immigrants who come looking for a better life, in leaving my country I felt I had not only left behind the people, the objects, and the land of my heart, but also the language I needed to be me.

The other night my husband, Tim, told our nine-year-old son, "You might not know it, but your mother is an alien." To prove it, he asked me to bring my green card, and there in bold blue letters we all read the words: Resident Alien, and below, U.S Department of Justice—Immigration and Naturalization Service. "Is that true?" my son Kelly gasped. I nodded.

I crossed the border from Mexico to the United States with my *gringo* husband, Tim, in 1994, two months after our son had been born. In those first years, with almost no English, no job, no friends, parents, sister, brother, aunts, uncles, cousins, I mostly felt lost.

Like many immigrants who come looking for a better life, in leaving my country I felt I had not only left behind the people, the objects, and the land of my heart, but also the language I needed to be me.

But, as my mother would say, *No hay mal que por bien no venga*—there is no bad from which some good does not come. And once again, mama was right.

Kelly grew up and began speaking his first words, both in English and Spanish, and along the way I learned, too. Our first school was *Sesame Street*. I am proud to tell you that I learned most of my English from Elmo, Cookie Monster, Grover, Big Bird, and Ernie.

Then one day my mother-in-law, who spoke no Spanish but cared for me very much, put Kelly and me in her car and took us to a place that would change my life forever. She brought us to the public library.

At this point I want to stop to say how honored I am to have won an award chosen and given by librarians. I am especially thrilled because the Pura Belpré Medal gave me the perfect opportunity to declare in the open my infatuation with the public library.

The day my mother-in-law took me inside the library, and I pushed Kelly's stroller into the children's section, I entered a heavenly realm. On shelves were rows and rows of books made of thick and bright paper. Inside the books there were words and also pictures or photographs, all rich, unique, artful, clearly made by great talent and much work. I was in awe. Were books for children in the United States *really* made like that?



Harvesting Hope by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Yuyi Morales

Every book I opened felt like a piece of art in my hands. And what was even better? I could read the stories and understand! Most texts were clear and simple, and when I didn't know some words, I looked at the pictures, and the meaning shone through.

I am a lucky person. My sister the astrologer tells me it is written in my stars that I would be privileged with mentors. My sister is a good star reader. On the path from that first trip to the library to this moment where I stand here celebrating children's books with you, I have been continuously taken by the hand by extraordinary people.

Librarians at the San Francisco Public Library worked patiently with my son and me. They pointed to authors and books that would inspire me profoundly, and as days passed they made me feel that the hallways of the library were more my

home than my own apartment. At night, just as gently, they would let me know it was closing time but that I could come back tomorrow again.

I cannot describe to you how astonished I was when a librarian explained to me that with one library card I could take home as many as twenty-two books (in most recent times that number has changed to fifty) for three weeks and still renew them three times if nobody else had requested them—and Kelly and I had two library cards together! The next time we went to the library, we brought our shopping cart with us.

But my mentors are in bunches, in great numbers. Writers like Alma Flor Ada and F. Isabel Campoy and illustrators like Ashley Wolff and Mira Reisberg have inspired me with their knowledge and with their passion for children's books. And to the beloved members of my writers' group, the Revisionaries, Jim Averbeck, Karen Erhardt, Lynn

Haze, Susan Katz, and Maria Vanlieshout, I thank them for joining me on the path. I also want to thank my agent Charlotte Sheedy for having the strength of a storm. When my work is in her hands, and I am out of her way, I feel safe and sound.

Today I am here to receive a Pura Belpré Medal and an honor, for the illustrations of two books that delight my heart. *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* was a seed rightly planted that now has germinated. Written by Kathleen Krull, extraordinaire biographer, the story of this hero of gentle manner but solid determination, came to me because Jeannette Larson, editor at Harcourt, hoped for a miracle and gave the story to a first-time illustrator.

I have nothing but great gratitude for the Harcourt team, and especially for Jeannette, for bringing Cesar Chavez to my life, for working together to harvest

this book, and for cheering me on all the way through.

Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book was a story that went haunting houses before it arrived on the desk of editor Samantha McFerrin, who, in usual circumstances, is *afraid* of skeletons.

I want to thank Sam for seeing beyond the *espanto*. Yes, Grandma Beetle's is a tale of death and about people whose time to die has arrived. But when Señor Calavera comes to take Grandma Beetle, she stalls for more time to rejoice in life: she cleans her house, she cooks delicious food, she fills piñatas with candies, she celebrates her birthday party in the company of her beautiful grandchildren, and as the day goes on, she makes friends with Death.

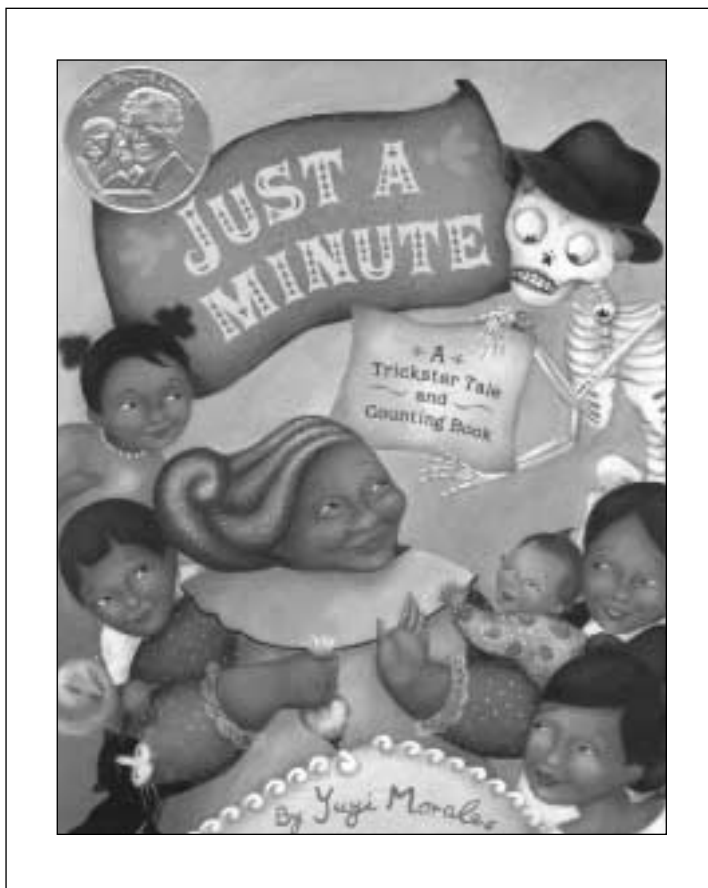
In Mexico, people like to say that Death is our most loyal companion; after all, it is born with us and with us it lives: *La muerte la llevamos dentro*, we all carry death inside us.

It still tickles me inside when I remember that infamous chapter of *La Familia Burron*, the comic magazine that my dad used to buy every Sunday and that made him laugh with his mouth open and his false teeth jumping up and down. In such episodes, the members of the Burron family realized that inside each of them there was a skeleton. Their skeletons walked with them, ate with them, they even slept in their same beds. And at the light of the discovery, the Burron family spends some time being afraid of themselves.

I am sorry to break the news, but inside of all of you there lives a skeleton, too.

However, it is my hope that you treat your skeleton with courtesy, perhaps you would even invite him to your next birthday party. You'll be surprised at how useful skeletons can be when you need a hand, or a leg, or even just a metatarsal.

I know my family wishes they could be here with me today. Kelly, my child, would love to come up to the stage and receive the award for me. He would even love to deliver my speech; he has tried before. He would do an excellent job, actually. And



Just a Minute by Yuyi Morales

again, like in all these years, I would have to learn from him.

My husband, Tim, my favorite *gringo*, my patron of the arts, my most loyal fan; I would not be here without his challenging me to conquer a new language and a new life. In the long process, he has rooted for me every day while loving me both in English and Spanish.

As for my parents, Eloina y Eligio, one of my sisters told me that the morning I called them to say I had won a great award, that after they hung up the telephone, both my mom and my dad sat on the bed and cried. You need to understand that my parents live many, many miles away in Mexico, where they can only hope that their child never appears in the news because when they turn on their TV or read the newspaper, they are most likely to hear that one of us got deported or harassed at the airport while entering the States. Or they might hear that some people are working to implement laws that won't allow our children to keep learning in Spanish at school, or they might even hear that one of us died while trying to cross the border.

So you might be able to understand how overwhelmed they felt the day I told them that in the news that day was a story with my name in it because people in the United States had welcomed, recognized, and cheered for my work.

My family is my engine; they are my *corazón*. You can find them all in my work. They are my stories, they are the colors of my painting, they are the lines of my landscapes, they are the accents on my words. Ask beautiful Kelly, and he would tell you how convinced he is that, no matter what color, what gender, or what age, he is one and every child I paint in my books. I think he might be right.

In a world of many stories, I'm indebted to you for celebrating my way to tell the tale. To thank you for being here today, I am asking the universe two wishes for you and me: One, *uno*, may we all learn to take care of all the children, as all the children of the world are our own. And two, *dos*, should we all go home and live in harmony with others and in harmony with what lives inside us—including our "skinny one." ☺

Cheek by Jowl

Animals in Children's Literature

Ursula K. Le Guin

*2004 May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture
Tempe, Arizona
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Ursula K. Le Guin

I. Animal, Human: Continuum, Dichotomy

I am writing this talk at a desk over which is pinned a painting from the Mexican state of Guerrero. It is in very bright colors of blue and red and orange and pink and green, and shows a village, drawn in the kind of perspective I understand—no vanishing point. There are lots of flowers the size of trees, or trees the size of flowers. This village is busy: a lady is selling pies; men are carrying sacks; a young man is proposing to a young woman; a gentleman is playing the guitar and a lady is snubbing him; people are gardening, grinding corn, cooking, coming out of church, going to school; a cowboy on a horse is herding some cows and a bull. There is a cock-fight going on, a donkey pulls a cart into town;

there are rabbits, chickens, and dogs in the house yards, at least I think they're dogs although they're rather hard to tell from the goats or the sheep next door, horses carrying loads are trotting down a street past the drunk man lying on his back kicking his heels in the air, there are fish in the stream, and up on the bright green hill under the bright golden sun stand two fine stags, one bright white and one bright red.

There are almost as many animals in the painting as people, and all of them are mixed up together, cheek by jowl, except for the wild stags, which stand aloof.

If you took the animals out of the picture, it wouldn't be a true picture of the village, any more than if you took

the people out of it, for the villagers' lives and the animals' lives are totally entwined. Food, drink, transportation, sport, the animals provide all that to the villagers, and therefore the villagers provide for the animals; each is at the service of the other. Interdependent. A community. Cheek by jowl. And this is the way most of us

have lived during the several thousand years of human history, until just the last century or two.

The two stags, the only wild animals in the picture, stand outside the village, not part of it, yet very much part of the picture.

Before history, before agriculture, we lived with those stags for hundreds of thousands of years as hunter-gatherers. A hunter-gatherer village typically consisted of people only, with maybe some pets—dogs or baby animals. Such a human community was an element in a predominantly nonhuman community: forest, jungle, grassland, or desert, with its stable population of plants and animals, its ecosystem. Each species, including ours, was part of this population, this interdependent system. Each species went about its business on a more or less equal footing—the tribal village, the anthill, the antelope herd, the wolf pack. As hunter-gatherers, our relationship to the animals was not one of using, caretaking, and ownership. We were among, not above. We were a link in the food chain. We hunted deer, lions hunted us. With the animals we didn't eat and that didn't eat us, our relationship was neutral or neighborly: some neighbors are tiresome, some are useful or liked or laughable or admirable.

This neighborliness or fellowship, when positive, was often seen as a spiritual kinship. In that kinship, the animals are always the elders, the fore-runners, the ancestors of the humans. They are the people of the Dream Time. We belonged to them, the people of the Deer or the children of the Badger. In the immense, immensely inhuman world of the stone age, the little communities of our naked, soft-skinned species, beset by both realistic and imaginary fears, needed to know and assert its fellowship, its kinship with the powerful, ancient, unchanging animal world all around it. We knew we were different, but we knew also that we belonged.

This was still true, I think, as late as Lucretius, who lived just before the Christian era. In his great poem,

Lucretius saw the nonhuman world as the matrix in which mankind is formed and nourished, to which we belong as the garnet belongs to the rock in which it crystallized and to which we will return as the sunlit wave returns to the sea.

But this is not how the tribes of the deserts of Judea saw it. They saw not a network but a hierarchy: humanity set apart and dominating everything else by divine mandate.

And the more we herded and bred animals for food and work, domesticating and dominating them, and the more we lived in cities among other humans only, the easier it was to separate ourselves from other species, to assert difference and dominance, denying kinship and its obligations. In Europe, the idea of community, neighborliness with animals, became so rare that St. Francis was considered very strange and wonderful for asserting it.

By the eighteenth century in Europe, we'd invented Nature. Nature is all the other species and all the places where they live and we don't. Idealized or demonized, Nature is humanity's Other. We stand outside it and above it.

In the forest or the farm, our interdependence with animals was unmistakable; community was a fact of life. We could despise our domestic animals, bully them, or brutalize them, but we couldn't get on without them and we knew it, and so we knew them. But the cities kept growing and the farms and the wilderness shrinking. After the Industrial Revolution, more and more people lived without any daily contact with other species; and in the twentieth century, when the Ford replaced the horse, the last animal to be of essential use in cities, it became possible to live a whole life indifferent to and ignorant of other species. The animals needful to us for food and other requirements are elsewhere, in distant batteries and ranches and slaughterhouses; our dependence on them is so well hidden that we can literally not know it. It takes an informed, active, and uncomfortable imagination even to connect a living pig or hen with the plastic-wrapped slab, the batter-fried lumps. The disconnection is radical, the alienation

complete. With the evidence of continuity gone, the sense of community is gone. We have made a world for ourselves alone, in which nothing matters; nothing has meaningful existence, but us. There are no Others.

In this radically impoverished, single-species world, pets become intensely important links to the nonhuman world. Watching the many animal shows on TV gives us the allusion of being in touch with that world. Bird watching, fishing, hunting—by now an entirely artificial high-tech sport, but linked sentimentally to its origins: through all these we seek connection with nonhuman beings, or a reminder, however artificial, that there used to be a connection. That other people used to live here. That we had a family.

Our storytellers offer such a connection.

II. Three Literatures

My wild and woolly ride through the millennia sketched out three periods—tribal/prehistoric; farm, village, and city; and high-tech industrial. Each has its literature of animals, about which I will go on generalizing in the most shameless fashion.

First: The oral literatures of hunter-gatherer peoples are largely myths, in which animals are protagonists, sometimes the only protagonists.

The general purpose of a myth is to tell us who we are—who we are as a people. Mythic narrative affirms our community and our responsibilities, and it is told as teaching-stories to both children and adults.

For example, many Native American mythologies concern a First People, animals that have language; among them are creators, tricksters, heroes, and villains; what they are doing, usually, is getting the



Le Guin owns this painting of a Mexican village (Guerrero, Mexico; artist unknown).

world ready for the “people who are coming,” that is, us, us humans, us Yurok or Hopi. Out of context, stories from these great mythologies may not make much sense, and so often get trivialized into just-so-stories—how the woodpecker got his red head, and so on. In the same way, the Jataka tales of India are retold as mere amusements, with no hint of their connection to the ideas of dharma, reincarnation, and the Buddha-nature. But a child who “gets” the story may “get” a sense of those deep connections without even knowing it.

Second: The oral and written literatures of preindustrial civilizations are, of course, about everything under the sun, but they all contain a powerful and permanent element of animal story, largely in the form of folktale, fairy tale, and fable, again told both to children and to adults. In these, the humans and animals mingle cheek by jowl just as in the Guerrero village.

Third: In postindustrial civilization, where animals are largely irrelevant to adult concerns, animal story is mostly perceived as being for children. Modern children hear or read stories from the earlier eras, both animal myths and animal

But what is it the kid is after—the baby wild with excitement at the sight of a kitten, the six-year-old spelling out Peter Rabbit, the twelve-year-old weeping as she reads Black Beauty? What is it the child perceives that her whole culture denies?

fables and tales, retold and illustrated for them, because animal stories are considered suitable for children, and because children want them, seek them, demand them. And there is the modern literature of animal stories, written sometimes for children, sometimes not, but the kids usually get hold of it. Although almost all nonsatirical writing about animals is automatically dismissed by literary critics as trivial, authors continue to write animal stories. They are writing in response to a real and permanent demand. Kids want animal stories. Why?

Why do most children respond both to real animals and to stories about them, fascinated by and identifying with creatures that our dominant religions and ethics consider mere objects for human use—raw material for our food, subjects of scientific experiments to benefit us, amusing curiosities of the zoo and the TV nature program, pets to improve our psychological health?

It appears that we give animal stories to children and encourage them to be interested in animals because we see children as inferior, mentally “primitive,” not yet fully humanized. So pets and zoos and animal stories are “natural” steps on the child’s way up to adult, exclusive humanity—rungs on the ladder from mindless, helpless babyhood to the full glory of intellectual maturity and mastery. Ontology recapitulating phylogeny in terms of the Great Chain of Being.

But what is it the kid is after—the baby wild with excitement at the sight of a kit-

ten, the six-year-old spelling out *Peter Rabbit*, the twelve-year-old weeping as she reads *Black Beauty*? What is it the child perceives that her whole culture denies?

By raiding my own bookshelves, asking friends, and getting wonderful help from the librarians at Multnomah County Library, I found the books to read for this talk. I hope I included all the real classics. I added some books of less literary merit as exemplary of certain types of animal story. If I knew books that were read by children, I included them whether or not they were published for children. I had to leave out picture books, or I’d still be reading my way through the Ark. I sadly excluded fabulous or invented animals—dragons, winged cats, etc.—a related but different subject. I had an absolutely wonderful time reading—mostly rereading—all these books, some of them after sixty years. When I tried to organize them it was less fun, and when I tried to wring a thesis or a theory out of them it wasn’t much fun at all. All I can offer you is taxonomy.

The organizing principle I settled on is a spectrum, running from jowl to cheek—from purely animal to purely human: from books in which animals independent of human beings are central characters, through books where the focus is on the relationship of animal and human, to books in which animals exist principally as symbols of human qualities, behaviors, or desires.

As for the thesis, I hoped to find some answers to the question I just asked: why does the child so often, so reliably, turn for stories to the beings who do not speak? I did find some themes, some threads of guidance, but I can say now, I came out of the jungle of Critter Lit with a

peacock’s feather and a tiger’s whisker and a white rabbit’s top hat, but with no answers at all.

III. Animals Speaking: Big and Little Languages

A paradox: Nobody has ever heard an animal truly speak in human language, and yet in every literature in the world do speak in human language. It is so universal a convention that we hardly notice it.

“Do you know,” asked the Wart, thinking of the thrush, “why birds sing or how? Is it a language?”

“Of course it’s a language. [replies Archimedes, Merlyn’s owl.] It isn’t a big language like human speech, but it’s large.”

“Gilbert White,” said Merlyn, “remarks, or will remark, however you like to put it, that ‘the language of birds is very ancient, and, like other ancient modes of speech, little is said, but much is intended. . . .’
—T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone*.

No other creature talks the way we do. Some birds can imitate our speech; carefully trained apes can signify wants or interests by signing words in ASL; but no animal except homo sapien has the capacity, activated in infancy, that allows us to learn the full range of human language. Syntax is the key here; not just single words, but combining words, and recombining. By arriving with the leash in its mouth and wagging its tail, a dog can certainly signify urgency, willingness, and walking out-at-opposite-ends-of-leash—accurately represented in language as “It’s time to go for a walk!” But I don’t know how a dog can say, “She and I might have gone for a walk if it hadn’t started raining so hard,” and I think probably a dog can’t even think it. Not all, but a lot of thought depends on language. To think about what happened, to imagine what didn’t happen—to tell a story or to tell a lie—to say “the thing that is not,” as the Houyhnhnms put it—you need grammar, syntax, verb tenses and modes, you need what Archimedes the owl calls “a big language.”

But there's a whole lot of stuff you can say or signify without any of that wonderful equipment. Such discourse is different from ours, less than ours, a little language—but why do we refuse to call it language? Merely to ensure that we know we're superior?

As Polynesia the parrot remarks to Dr. Dolittle, "Sometimes people annoy me dreadfully—such airs they put on—talking about 'the dumb animals.' Dumb! Huh!"

Some scientists use language literally as a shibboleth, to draw an uncrossable line between the human species and all other species (see "Further Reading" sidebar). Cartesian dualism, Christian exclusivism, and behaviorist theory all have contributed for two centuries to the doctrine that animals are machines, programmed like computers, without minds, thoughts, emotions, communicative ability, even sentience—nothing in common with human beings—despite the curious similarities of our bodies and brains and behavior.

This pseudoscientific doctrine of absolute difference rises from and reinforces our human clannishness, our prejudice against anybody who doesn't do things the way we do. *Those people don't talk right, they use bad grammar, it's all bar-bar-bar, they're barbarians, they aren't really people. They're animals. Only we are The People: only we talk real language.* There goes the Bandar-Log in full cry!

God in the bible says, "Let there be light." Only we humans, according to the bible, are in God's image. So nobody but God and us can say "Let there be light."

But I ask you what is a rooster at four in the morning saying? Do we really have to believe that there is only one way to talk?

I submit that most children know better. Children have to be persuaded, convinced, that animals don't talk. They have to be informed that there is an impassable gulf between Man and Beast, and taught not to look across it. But so long as they disobey orders and go on looking, they know better. They know that we and creatures physiologically like us are mutually quite comprehensible.

The reason it seems so natural for animals to talk in all folklore and many kinds of literature is that animals do talk and we do understand them.

We do it by translation, mostly. So do the animals. They don't translate our big language, or not much of it. What the dog probably hears is "Rover, bar-bar-bar walk blah?" but Rover was on his feet before he heard "walk" because he had translated our body language instantly and accurately as "We're going walking now!" And we translate the little languages of the animals—which are mostly "spoken" by body movements and positions, and sounds that are meaningful but are not specifically symbolic words—into our big language, with all its symbolism and syntax and subjunctives. So we understand that Rover is saying, very much like T.S. Eliot, "Hurry up, please, it's time!" And the rooster says to the darkness at four a.m., "Let there be light!" And the cat as he walks by waving his tail remarks, "I am the Cat that walks by himself, and all places are alike to me."

As this last example shows, some people are better at translating than others, and we should listen to them if we really want to know what the beasts are saying.

IV. The Animal Biography

The quality of a translation matters both literally and ethically. A mistranslation can be a mere error, or it can be deliberate, in which case it's misrepresentation—a wrong done to the speaker. Few of the authors I'm talking about deliberately mistranslate animal behavior and communication. But some authors are particularly careful, scientifically careful, about their translations, never ascribing any feeling or intention or thought to the animal except on evidence gained by patient and methodical observation. As in all good science the purity and austerity of the method is beautiful in itself, and if the tale is well told the result is solidly satisfying.

My prime example of this scrupulous honesty is the book called *Red Heifer* by Frank Dalby Davison. If you don't know *Red Heifer*, please go find it; it is a great animal story, brilliantly truthful, compassionate, with a fiery, fearless, and tragic

heroine. It is also—and this theme will turn up again—a lament for a lost wilderness. The Australians quite rightly gave it their Gold Medal for Best Australian Novel in 1934.

In this strictest form of the animal biography, the creatures do not talk or think in the "big language." The author presents the animal's perceptions and feelings within its own frame of reference, avoiding interpretation in human terms as much as possible. This "method of least interpretation" sounds cold, but it by no means excludes emotional response, and may even enhance it. It can only come from long, close, real observation of animals, which is likely to lead to identification with them. The seven animal biographies I selected are all particularly warm and moving books.

Of all the books on my list, perhaps *Bambi* has been most misrepresented, sentimentalized, and degraded. If I say *Bambi* and you are thinking cutesy thoughts about little skunks and flowers, you are suffering from Disney-itis. Please go back and read Felix Salten's book. It is a book that tries to tell what it is to be a wild deer. It is beautiful, truthful in its observations and its emotions: noble, austere, and subtle.

Now, dog stories. Most dog stories are love stories, aren't they? Jack London and Albert Payson Terhune are truthful observers of dog behavior and try honestly to interpret it in its own terms, but both *White Fang* and *Lad* have a broad romantic, even sentimental streak. *Lad's* loyalty and virtue are rather overwhelming. Jack London gets carried away by the idea that to dogs, men are gods. Loyal obedience to the alpha of your pack doesn't really equate to worship of a deity, though the human alpha male may like to think so.

In *The Incredible Journey*, Sheila Burnford's two dogs and a cat have no highfalutin ideas. Mostly we just see what they do. Burnford's realism and sober reticence give her story the credibility it (admittedly) needs, and a strong emotional wallop, too. Eric Knight's *Lassie Come-Home* avoids sentimentality and earns its affective power by showing us the utter, unreasoning directness of the dog's motives and acts.

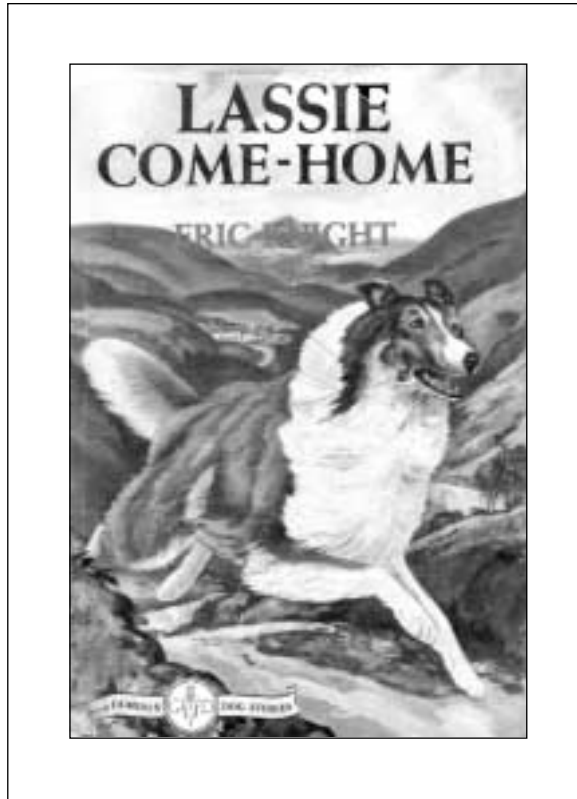
The master of the realistic biography is surely Ernest Thompson Seton. Whether it's a bear or a cottontail rabbit or a crow, Seton brilliantly and carefully translates animal behavior to tell us a humanly comprehensible, compassionate, moving life-story.

His intention is didactic. He wants his readers to know what the "lives of the hunted" are really like, and this information has a strong moral purpose. If we know what life is like for somebody else, if we have imaginatively enjoyed and suffered with them, we will be less dismissive, less fearful or scornful of them, we will be more open to love. Our spiritual community will have been enlarged.

I chose *Biography of a Grizzly* for my list because when I was a kid I could only read it when I was feeling brave, it made me so sad and so angry—like the old, sad, angry bear, driven out of his kingdom, a grizzly Lear. Wahb the grizzly never speaks, though when he puts a mark on a tree it is translated: "My bath. Keep away! (Signed) WAHB"—in "a language of mud, hair, and smell that every mountain creature could read." Seton does not force human intellect or feeling into the description of behavior; and when he comes to translate the language of smells, as Wahb understands it, it makes a fine, funny, poetical passage.

It's not a long step from this to putting actual words into the creature's mouth. Dhan Mukerji's *Gay-Neck* moves from interpretation of behavior by the boy who owns and trains the pigeon, to autobiography by the pigeon himself. Certainly *Gay-Neck* is the best one to tell us what it was like to fly messages over a battlefield in the First World War. The distress, fear, and above all the incomprehension of his narrative are touching and credible; how is a carrier pigeon to understand a war? At the end of it he and the man he was with both come home shell-shocked, traumatized, sick from what they have seen. They find healing in a lamasery; the man learns to pray, "Lead me from the unreal to the

real, from darkness into light;" the bird, in his own morning worship, flies to salute the rising sun. The book is admirable in its tender but unsentimental vision of man and bird as suffering creatures, equal souls.



Lassie Come-Home by Eric Knight

The founding classic of the animal autobiography, surely, is Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. It is of course a teaching, preaching story, meant to make us walk in horse-shoes and feel what horses undergo at our hands. It is also a fine novel with vivid characters and a strong sense of friendship and of delight. Beauty tells his story in a strong, clean, direct prose, just what a well-bred saddle horse ought to speak; his vocabulary and power of comparison go far beyond anything a horse could think, but his knowledge and observations are realistically limited to what a horse could know—or feel. An enormous part of "speaking for animals" is the translation of feeling—sensation and emotion—into words. Anna Sewell excels in this. The scene when Beauty sees his old friend Ginger dead is harrowing yet completely unsentimental. The book has a strength

and dignity that no other horse story quite matches.

As an example of animal autobiography in the cautionary tradition of *Black Beauty* I chose Marion Ashmore's charming dog story, *Lost, Stolen, or Strayed*, now being read by the third generation in my family. Frank Linderman's *Stumpy the Chipmunk* is an example of the Seton tradition, the animal telling you its life-story so you know what its life is like. Linderman so faithfully limits Stumpy's voice to the forgetful, happy-go-lucky experience of a small, fast-moving prey animal, that Stumpy comes off a bit unsympathetic, losing a wife here, a friend there, no big deal . . . but then, should a chipmunk have to act out a tragedy?

A recent and unusual example of animal autobiography is Caroline Alexander's *Mrs. Chippy's Last Expedition*, a journal of Shackleton's third voyage to the Antarctic, related by the carpenter's cat. It is a true story, illustrated by photographs. Caroline Alexander knows everything that can be known about those men on that awful trip, and she also writes with authenticity in the voice of a tomcat. As the cat sees it, he is in full control of the expedition. It is an extremely funny book and the hero's serenity in desperate situations is very fine; but a child reading it might be in tears at the end. They always say Shackleton never lost a man, but they don't talk about the animals.

V. The Animal Novel

In animal autobiographies, the animals relate their story to us, a pure literary convention. They may understand human speech or they may not, but they don't talk to or with humans, only to other animals. This same lack of interspecies communication holds in my next category of animal-centered books, which I call the animal novel.

We are still on the jowl side of my spectrum. Animals are the protagonists. Human beings may run the world, but they are secondary characters in the story.

Though animal behavior in these books may be species-characteristic and may have a great deal of observation-based realism in it, there's a fantasy element: what the animals do is a mixture of behavior proper to their species and human behavior. *Black Beauty* and *Wahb* do only what a horse or a bear would do, but animal novel heroes act from reasoned motives or for ends that (as far as we know) are human motives and aims not shared by any other species. And some of them use tools, wear clothes, drive cars, have wars—acting out patterns of behavior that are strictly human. There is no explanation, no justifying of this anthropomorphism in most of the books that do it. They simply assume it will be accepted; and it is. Could there be stronger evidence of the felt community of human and animal than such an unapologetic and successful assertion of it? Beatrix Potter was a superb naturalist; her *Peter Rabbit* is absolutely a rabbit; but he also wears clothes and drinks tea—just as *Coyote*, in the legends, may carry a bow, or make a fire.

Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* story "The White Seal" begins like a biography, with grand realistic descriptions of how a fur seal grows up, and seal colonies and mating battles; but then it takes off in another direction, when Kotik realizes—as no seal could in fact realize—that his people are objects of genocide, and that he is called to seek a haven for them where men cannot find and kill them. His odyssey in finding that place makes a great wish-fulfillment story, that has grown less plausible but even more poignant in the 110 years since it was written.

Two classic animal novels are [E. B. White's] *Charlotte's Web* and [Robert C. O'Brien's] *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. In both, the animals think and speak like human beings, and act out dramas that are a mixture of animal and human problems and solutions.

Charlotte's Web begins with a human point of view, the child Fern, but shifts quite soon to the animals. They talk, they act; Fern listens. She understands animal language, though she never speaks it. And here we strike a theme that runs deep in animal stories: the child is in touch with animals, but only while she is a child.

Once Henry Fussy becomes important to Fern, she doesn't listen to the animals any more—she can't hear them. As Mowgli comes into his manhood he must leave the jungle. Only the virgin can touch the unicorn.

One reason kids like E. B. White's book, I think, is that it's about justice and injustice. Is it fair for a farmer to kill a runt pig? Has a spider a right to kill flies? These questions are discussed openly and firmly. And it is a mutual aid story, beast helping beast, a fine variation on the folktale theme of the *Animal Helper*. And finally it is a tale of the golden age, the peaceable kingdom, the old rural American dream, the farm children dream of, the farm we wish they could live on.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH is totally animal-centered, but though humans are offstage they are powerful and dangerous, they control the world. The scientists of NIMH have altered the rats' very nature, enhancing their longevity and intelligence.

The only tame animal in the story, the farm cat, appears as an enemy—on the human side, not the animal side. Yet it never speaks, and it acts just like a cat while the so-called "wild" mice wear clothes, have furniture, have both speech and reason. *Mrs. Frisby* hasn't been "enhanced" like the rats, yet she seems quite as intelligent as they; her "enhanced" husband even taught her to read, though not as well as her children can. There is real incoherence here.

Some people are impatient with such quibbles with fantasy—"Well, none of it's

real, what does it matter that it's inconsistent?" It matters. The farther a story departs from accepted reality, the more it relies on its own inner consistency. By giving us a "scientific" explanation of why the rats act like humans, but no explanation of why the mice also act like humans, O'Brien risks our willing suspension of belief. That most of us read the book without thinking about the inconsistency shows, perhaps, how willing we are to believe, to admit our fellow-feeling with these morally troubled creatures.

For *Mrs. Frisby*, too, is about justice. First, the unstated but fundamental question of the right of human beings to imprison and experiment on animals; the rats and mice don't discuss this, but in escaping from the laboratory they clearly state their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Then, the poignant question, "Where does a group of civilized rats fit in?" They used to live by stealing from humans, but now, as creatures with human intelligence, they see such dependence as wrong and degrading. They must create an independent, a new civilization of their own. The unnaturalness of their situation, the risks they run, the fragility of their utopian vision, are vividly described.

The book is again a tale of mutual aid among animals. The sense of the need to collaborate, even to the point of self-sacrifice, is strong. But humans are excluded from the collaboration; they are the enemy, they are what the animals have to help each other against. And though the book has a satisfyingly happy finale, I'm not sure that I have much confidence that the rats' utopia in the hidden valley can endure. There's an awful lot stacked

Further Reading

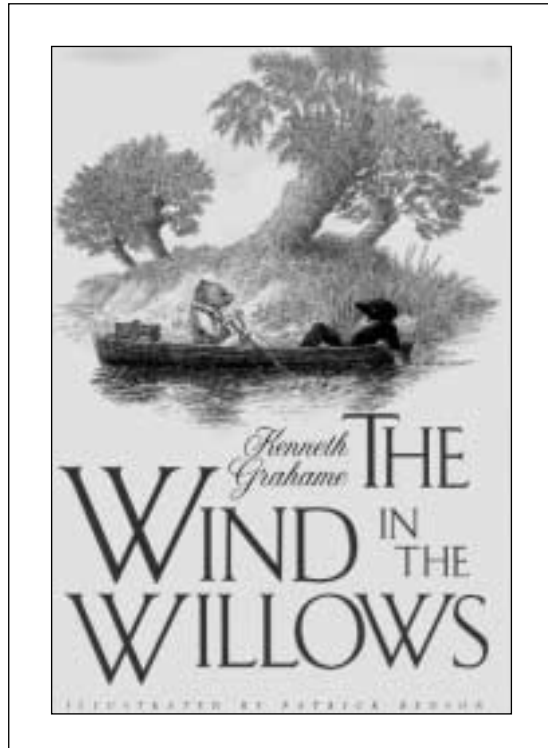
For a thoughtful and thoroughly research-supported discussion of animal cognition, see Donald R. Griffin, *Animal Minds* (University of Chicago Press, 1992). Griffin shows how a rational wariness among biologists, zoologists, etc., about interpreting animal behavior in human terms, taken to irrational theoretical extremes, stultified scientific investigation of animal behavior for half the twentieth century. It still lingers on as a mindless dread of "anthropomorphizing" the animal subject—even when the subject happens to be an anthropoid, patiently signing from its cage, in American Sign Language, "Let me out."

against them. That unstated darkness makes the book all the deeper in the end.

In Brian Jacques' *Redwall* there are no human characters. A few words, such as paw for hand, remind us that the mouse protagonists have animal bodies, but they wear clothes, farm with tools, live in a great abbey building, write books, and so on. Evil rats organize an army, and the mice, though natively peaceful, go to war. Social hierarchy by species is rigid: rats are low, bad creatures, moles and other common folk "tug their snouts respectfully" when addressing mice, who are "gennel-beasts." A reader coming to this book as an adult, as I did, might ask why they're called mice when they don't do anything mice do but act just like a lot of bloody-minded feudal humans. Perhaps, given the mouse stereotype of small-harmless-cute, calling them mice makes children find them less daunting than bloody-minded feudal humans, and so identify with them more easily.

Redwall is a fantasy. Brian Jacques makes no pretense of realism. I'm willing to say that my inability to believe his mice are mice is my own problem. I have a much more serious issue with Richard Adams' *Watership Down*. This book, published for children but an adult best-seller, was praised for its truth to rabbit life, and Adams rather insistently cites his source, R. M. Lockley's authoritative observational study *The Private Life of the Rabbit*. He certainly used Lockley for much realistic detail. But, while Lockley states and repeats that "the doe is the center of the rabbit community, a matriarchy," that "it is always the doe who initiates a new colony," that the females are the brains of rabbit society—Adams presents it as a militaristic patriarchy in which males do all planning, thinking, and acting. The doe rabbits are mindless breeders, so beneath notice that, when a heroic band of bucks sets out to establish a new home, they go along for two hundred pages before it occurs to them that they may have a problem getting a new warren started because they didn't bring any does with them. Does this sound like any male rabbit you ever knew?

I might try to swallow the egregious sexism, but I won't, because Adams claimed scientific authority for it. He wanted to write a regressive fantasy of male superiority—all right, some people like that sort of thing. But it is not all right to cite a respected source of information while systematically misrepresenting the information. That is cheating. It was clever cheating, too, because in 1972 blatant



The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame

male supremacism was becoming less acceptable, and Adams got away with it by passing it off as animal behavior. People could say, "Oh well, it's just rabbits, after all." Only it isn't rabbits at all. Rabbits do not behave that way. A book that falsifies animal behavior as a mask for the indulgence of fantasies of morally regressive human behavior is not, to my mind, a book to give any child, or any adult either.

A recent novel, *Fire Bringer* by David Clement-Davies, has some troubling similarities to *Watership Down*. While evidently relying on scientific observers such as F.F. Darling and T.H. Clutton-Brock for a lot of information about red deer society, the novelist simply flouts their careful descriptions of gender relations: he makes stags the bosses, year-

round. Then he has them taking orders from a megalomaniac leader and setting up a cruel, coercive social order. There is an interesting religious vein in *Fire Bringer*, but it is strained and artificial. A book that brought out a spiritual element in deer existence while respecting the ceremonies and arrangements of deer gender and society would be more convincing. Of course, we have a book that does just that, and I am happy to name it again: it's called *Bambi*.

Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* is even more patently a fantasy than the animal novels I have been talking about. It may well be the founder of their lineage. The rat siege of *Redwall* seems very like the war with the Wild Wooders that climaxes Grahame's story, even to the brave badger who helps the heroes. In these books virtue is a matter of species: rats, weasels, stoats, ferrets and adders are all bad by nature, born villains. Seen as a kind of protoracism, this moral genotyping makes one uneasy; the England of 1908 was a ruthlessly classed society, which the book reflects, along with a widespread human response to certain species.

Of course, this isn't all there is to be said about Kenneth Grahame's beautiful and enduringly funny book. Toads mostly get a bad press, and humor often doesn't age well, but Mr. Toad sitting in the road crying "O Bliss! O poop-poop! O my!"—Mr. Toad has made us laugh for ninety years. And the vision of Pan has made some of us cry, too.

The Wind in the Willows is a crossover book escaping classification. Though the story is about the animals, human beings play a part in it, and—here is where the fantasy becomes wonderfully audacious—the human beings are in the animals' world, not the other way round. When Toad is jailed as a car thief, the jailer's daughter helps him escape disguised as her aunt the washerwoman. Ernest Shepard's illustration of this is marvelous—is the aunt toad-size or is the toad aunt-size? It does not matter. We are in a world where the human and the animal interact as equals—the world of the

god Pan, of myth and folktale, miraculously recaptured in this sunlit, nostalgic romance.

VI. Jowl Meets Cheek

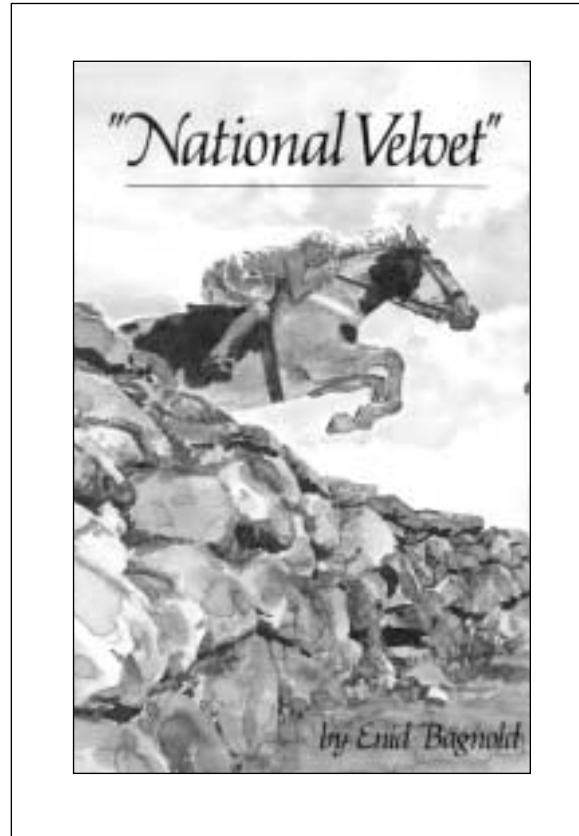
Now I come to the kind of book that might be seen as the typical animal story—the tale of the relationship between human and animal. A boy and a dog. A girl and a horse.

Many of the books I called animal biographies could be put under this heading too: *White Fang*, *Gay-Neck*, *Lad*, *Black Beauty* all have strong emotional bonds with their human owners or others. And in almost all the animal biographies and novels, the world animals live in is controlled by or tremendously influenced by human beings. But still, in those books the animal is at the center of the story. With Will James's *Smoky* we're at a crossover point—Smoky is a great biography of a horse, but it's also a great portrait of a cowboy, and of the relationship of the cowboy and the horse, and of life on the range. Smoky and his cowboy Clint are at the same time stereotypes and vivid individuals—like all the characters in a good Western. And again, it's a love story, a story about love.

In most of these stories the relationship is positive, involving the growth of trust, dependence, companionship. Often it is enabling, liberating, even a redemption—to the animal, the human, or both. But it may be a negative connection, involving the wild animal's well-deserved fear of the human, as in *Bambi* and many Seton stories, or the human abuse of tamed animals, as in episodes in *Black Beauty*, *White Fang*, and *Smoky*.

Straightforward classics of the positive, loving, enabling relationship between child and animal are *The Black Stallion* and *Misty of Chincoteague* and all the galloping herd of their descendants by Farley and Henry and many other authors. Then there is *National Velvet*, really a delicate satirical comedy about human relation-

ships and ambitions, but deeply sympathetic to the child's passion for the horse, and allowing her the marvelous fairy tale victory, oh, better even than Seabiscuit! And there's *Gentle Ben*, where boy saves bear and bear saves boy. Again we're meeting the theme of mutual aid, the Animal Helper. There's *Old Yeller*, where dog rescues boy but boy in the end can't rescue dog. And in *Julie of the Wolves*, the



National Velvet by Enid Bagnold

wolves save the child, thanks to her wits and courage and her knowledge of wolf society and etiquette, but she cannot save the wolves; that book has a very bitter ending.

All these stories I've mentioned are fairly realistic, but they have a fantasy counterpart for younger children. Some of our animal friends are stuffed. One of them is covered with velveteen. The most famous of them are Pooh and Piglet and that lot. I won't dwell on them because I'm only talking about real animals. As one who lived for years with stuffed animals, dear friends and active companions, far more autonomous, adventurous, and unpre-

dictable than any doll I ever met, I will only say that the borders of reality are less defined than some believe. But I must go back to the unstuffed animals.

Three of the great works of children's literature and animal literature are *Dr. Dolittle*, *The Jungle Book*, and *The Sword in the Stone*. They are all about the relationship of human and animal; in each it is different, each explores it at depth.

That may sound a bit fancy, talking of *Dr. Dolittle*, but Hugh Lofting's unpretentious fantasy deserves its classic status. As in *The Wind in the Willows*, animals and people interact without the slightest plausibility and without the slightest hesitation. This is because the animals act like people, mostly. But they act better than most people. None of them does anything cruel or immoral. Gub-Gub is very piggy, to be sure, and the Lion has to be scolded by his wife before he'll help the other animals, but this is the Peaceable Kingdom, where the lion will truly lie down with the lamb. *Dr. Dolittle* helps animals by sheltering and healing them; they begin to help him in return; and that is the theme and the basis of almost everything in the story. "So long as the birds and the beasts and the fishes are my friends, I do not have to be afraid...." This theme of mutual aid, of the Animal Helper, is ancient in folktale and before that in myth. Every people in the world understood it, until we drove the animals out of our streets and skyscrapers; I think every child in the world still understands it. To be friends with the animals is to be a friend and a child of the world, connected to it, nourished by it, belonging to it.

Lofting's morality is entirely sweet and sunny. In Kipling's *Mowgli* stories, the connections between human and animal are complex and ultimately tragic. *Mowgli* is a link between his village people and the people of the jungle, and like all go-betweens, all liminal figures, he is torn between the two sides, torn apart. There is no common ground between the village and the jungle; they have turned their back on each other. In every lan-

guage of the animals Mowgli can say, “We be of one blood ye and I!”—but can he truly say it in Hindi? And yet that is his mother’s tongue, his mother’s blood. Whom must he betray?

The wolf child, the wild boy, both in rare and painful reality and in Kipling’s dream-story, can never, in the end, be at home. The ache of exile from Eden is there even in the first story, “Mowgli’s Brothers,” ever stronger in “Letting in the Jungle” and “The Spring Running.” Those are heartbreaking stories. Yet from *The Jungle Book* we may also carry with us all our lives the blessing of those lazy hours and breathless adventures when boy and wolf, bear, black panther, python, speak and think and act in joyous community: the mystery and beauty of belonging, totally belonging to the wildness of the world.

T. H. White’s *The Sword in the Stone* is as full of animals as my Guerrero painting. In the first chapter King Arthur-to-be, currently known as the Wart, takes out a goshawk, loses him, and meets Merlyn’s owl Archimedes:

“Oh, what a lovely owl!” cried the Wart.

But when he went up to it and held out his hand, the owl grew half as tall again, stood up as stiff as a poker, closed its eyes so that there was only the smallest slit to peep through [. . .] and said in a doubtful voice:

“There is no owl.”

Then it shut its eyes entirely and looked the other way.

“It’s only a boy,” said Merlyn.

“There is no boy,” said the owl hopefully, without turning round.

Merlyn undertakes Arthur’s education, which consists mostly of being turned into animals. Here we meet the great mythic theme of Transformation, which is a central act of shamanism, though Merlyn doesn’t make any fuss about it. The boy becomes a fish, a hawk, a snake, an owl, and a badger. He participates, at thirty years per minute, in the sentience

of trees, and then, at two million years per second, in the sentience of stone. All these scenes of participation in animal being are funny, vivid, startling, and wise. (The reason I cite *The Sword in the Stone* is that when he put it into *The Once and Future King*, White revised out some of the finest passages, replacing the snake with a political satire about ants, and the cosmic vision with a visit to the wild geese—a nice chapter, but a heavy loss.)

When a witch puts Wart into a cage to fatten him up, the goat in the next cage plays Animal Helper and rescues them all. All animals rightly trust Wart, which is proof of his true kingship. That he goes along on a boar hunt does not vitiate this trust: to White, true hunting is a genuine relationship between hunter and hunted, with implacable moral rules, and a high degree of honor and respect for the prey. The emotions aroused by hunting are powerful, and White draws them all together in the scene of the death of the hound Beaumont, killed by the boar, in a passage I have never yet read without crying.

At the climax of the book, Wart can’t draw the sword of kingship from the stone anvil by himself. He calls to Merlyn for help, and the animals come.

There were otters and nightingales and vulgar crows and hares, and serpents and falcons and fishes and goats and dogs and dainty unicorns and newts and solitary wasps and goat-moth caterpillars and corkin-drills and volcanoes and mighty trees and patient stones. . . . all, down to the smallest shrew mouse, had come to help on account of love. Wart felt his power grow.

Each creature calls its special wisdom to the boy who has been one of them, one with them. The pike says, “Put your back into it,” a stone says, “Cohere,” a snake says, “Fold your powers together with the spirit of your mind”—and:

“The Wart walked up to the great sword for the third time. He put out his right hand softly and drew it out as gently as from a scabbard.”

T. H. White was a man to whom animals were very important, perhaps in part

because his human relationships were so tormented. But his sense of connection with nonhuman lives goes far beyond mere compensation; it is a passionate vision of a moral universe, a world of terrible pain and cruelty from which trust and love spring like the autumn crocus, vulnerable and unconquerable. *The Sword in the Stone*, which I first read at thirteen or so, influenced my mind and heart in ways which must be quite clear in the course of this talk, convincing me that trust cannot be limited to mankind, that love cannot be specified. It’s all or nothing at all. If, called to reign, you distrust and scorn your subjects, your only kingdom will be that of greed and hate. Love and trust and be a king, and your kingdom will be the whole world. And to your coronation, among all the wondrous gifts, an “anonymous hedgehog will send four or five dirty leaves with some fleas on them.”

VII. Fables and Psychic Fragments

Now we’ve come toward the purely human end of my spectrum, where the animal exists mixed with or as a reflection of the human.

In the old-fashioned fable, animals represent their species but are scarcely individuals, and their behavior is not observed but stereotyped, archetypal: the wily fox, the timid mouse. In Aesop’s fables, the Jataka tales, and the example on my list, the Grimms’ *Household Tales*, animals often symbolize and enact human behaviors and qualities.

The Grimms’ tales are a verbal equivalent of the painting of the Guerrero village. Of the fifty stories in my Lucy Crane translation, twenty-nine have domestic or wild animals as central or active characters, and in almost every story domestic animals are part of daily life—horses, donkeys, oxen, cattle, dogs, cats, geese. Animals and humans mingle on an equal footing, keeping house or traveling together, fooling or cheating one another, cheek by jowl. This is the old world, which doesn’t belong to humans, as our world does. Nobody here is boss. In general, everybody can talk to everybody else. You can get into an argument with a bean or a sausage. Moral superiority isn’t a matter of species, but is individual and unpre-

dictable. As a rule the clever weak defeat the stupid strong, and the compassionate are helped by those they have helped. But justice in folktales is unpredictable and arbitrary; the hero of “The White Snake” saves the lives of three starving baby ravens by killing his horse so they can eat it. Good for the ravens, hard on the horse. Two repeated themes are notable: Transformation, where the animal is actually a human being under a spell, as in “The Frog Prince” and “The Wild Swans”—and the Animal Helper, such as the ants who help Aschenputtel sort her lentils so she can go to the ball.

Ever since the Stone Age people have been calling other people greedy as a hog or brave as a lion. What is remarkable about “A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms” is not so much that Jonathan Swift used horses to provide a model of Enlightenment morality, but that he used humans, not animals, to satirize human vice. The honesty and dignity of the Houyhnhnms is not much exaggerated from that of ordinary horses, but they speak, and so are raised above the brute; while the Yahoos have no language, and no virtues, and so are sunk below any brute. Gulliver says, “I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal.” Swift is careful never to compare the Yahoos to apes. If the Yahoos were mere apes they’d have, as it were, an excuse for their nastiness. He wanted us to see them as men, and we do.

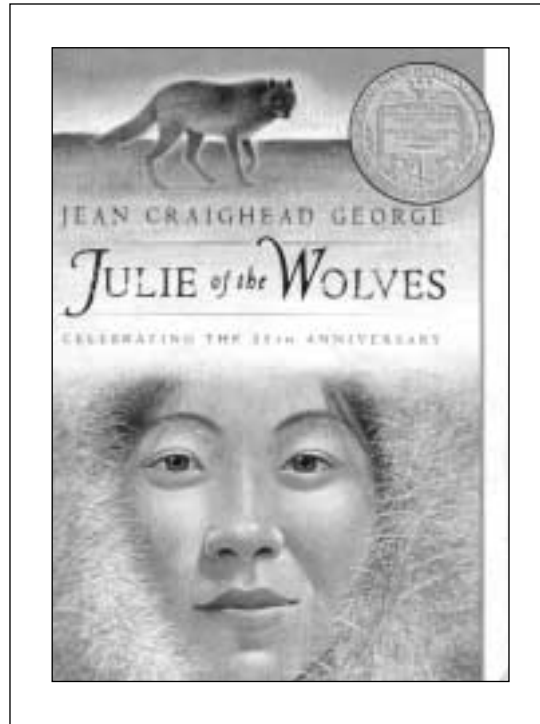
George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is a less complex satire, more straightforward in its stereotypes, therefore perhaps less disturbing to a young reader; but Orwell is in the end even harsher than Swift, for loyalty and honesty lose out in this modern fable, and whether the story is read as politically topical or as a general warning, its message is merciless.

The last animal satire I’ll mention is one you may not think of as satirical, it is so sweet-natured, and perhaps all the stronger for that; I mean *Ferdinand the Bull*, which, when you come right down to it, is almost as hard on humans as Swift is, but a good deal more hopeful than Orwell. And is there any other satire in the

world that ends, with no irony at all, “He is very happy”?

The last books in this section are two widely different fantasies.

Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy is a long, richly imagined, and deeply incoherent work, in which I’ll try only to trace the part animals play. Despite appearances, it is a small part.



Julie of the Wolves by Jean Craighead George

The two cats in the story, who have a small but important role, do what cats have often done in myth and fable: they cross between worlds. Otherwise they’re just cats, realistically drawn. Animals are otherwise absent from the books, except for a tribe of polar bears who talk and build forts and use weapons, but who don’t have daemons, as humans do.

Daemons are animals in form, and the reason why the trilogy seems to be full of animals is that every human being has one. Until you reach puberty your daemon may take any animal shape at any moment; with your sexual maturity your daemon settles into a permanent form, always of the other gender. Social class is evidently a decisive influence, as we are told that servants always have dog dae-

mons, and see that upper-class people’s daemons are rare and elegant creatures such as snow leopards. Your daemon accompanies you physically and closely at all times, everywhere; separation is unbearably painful. Though they do not eat or excrete, daemons are tangible, and you can pet and cuddle with your own daemon, though you must not touch anybody else’s. Daemons are rational creatures and speak fluently with their owners and with others.

Wish fulfillment is strong in this concept and give it great charm: the ever-loyal, ever-present, beloved companion, soulmate, comforter, guardian angel, and ultimately perfect pet: you don’t even have to remember to feed it. But I think Pullman overloads the concept and then confuses it. He implies strongly that the daemon is a kind of visible soul, that to be severed from it is fatal; his plot hinges on the horror of this severance. But then he begins changing the rules: we find that witches can live separate from their daemons; in the second volume we are in our world, where nobody has visible or tangible daemons; and back in her world, Lyra leaves her daemon on the wharves of hell, and though she misses him, she lives on perfectly competently, and in fact saves the universe, without him. Their reunion seems almost perfunctory.

In a fantasy, to change or break your own rules is to make the story, literally, inconsequential.

If the daemons are meant to show that we are part animal and must not be severed from our animality, they can’t, since the essence of animality is the body, the living body with all its brainless needs and embarrassing functions—exactly what the daemons do not have. They are spiritual beings, forms without substance. They are fragments or images of the human psyche, wholly contingent, having no independent being and therefore incapable of relationship. Lyra’s much-emphasized love for her daemon is self-love. In Pullman’s world human beings are dreadfully alone, since God has gone senile and there aren’t any real animals.

Except those two cats. Let us place our hope in the cats.

[Lewis Carroll's] *Through the Looking Glass* begins with cats. Alice is talking to Dinah and the kittens, who don't talk back, so Alice does it for them, and then she climbs up onto the mantelpiece with one of the kittens, and goes through the mirror . . . (As noted before, cats cross between worlds).

The looking-glass world and the one down the rabbit hole are dreams, and therefore all the characters in them are aspects of Alice—again, fragments of psyche, but in a very different sense from Pullman's daemons. Their independence is notable. As soon as Alice gets through the glass into the garden, the flowers not only talk but talk back; they are extremely rude and passionate flowers. As in folktale, all creatures there are on an equal footing, mingling and arguing, even turning into each other—the baby becomes a piglet, the White Queen a sheep—transformation going both ways. Train passengers include humans, a goat, a beetle, a horse, and a gnat, which begins as a tiny voice in Alice's ear but presently is “about the size of a chicken.” It asks if Alice dislikes all insects, and she replies, with admirable aplomb, “I like them when they can talk. None of them ever talk, where I come from.”

Alice is a nineteenth-century British middle-class child with a tight, strict, moral code of self-respect and respect for others. Her good manners are sorely tried by the behavior of the dream-creatures—whom we can see, if we choose, as acting out Alice's own impulses of rebellion, her passion, her wild willfulness. Violence is not permitted; we know that the Queen's “Off with her head!” is a threat not to be executed. And yet nightmare is never far off. The creatures of Alice's dreams come close to total uncontrol, to madness, and she must wake to know herself.

The Alice books are not animal stories, but there is no way I could leave them out of this talk; they are the purest modern lit-

erary instance of the animals of the mind, the dream beasts that every human society has known as ancestors, as spirit-doubles, as omens, as monsters, and as guides. We have spiraled back round to the Dream Time, where human and animal are one.

This is a sacred place. That we got back to it by following a little Victorian girl down a rabbit hole is absolutely crazy and appropriate.

VIII. Conclusion

We human beings have made a world reduced to ourselves and our artifacts, but we weren't made for it, and have to teach our children to live in it. Physically and mentally equipped to be at home in a richly various and unpredictable environment, competing and coexisting with creatures of all kinds, our children must learn poverty and exile, to live on concrete among endless human beings, seeing a beast now and then through bars. But our innate, acute interest in animals as fellow beings, friend or enemy or food or playmate, can't be instantly eradicated; it resists deprivation. And imagination and literature are there to fill the void and reaffirm the greater community.

The themes I have picked out along the way support this idea. The Animal Helper motif of mutual aid across species, which we see in folktale and as clearly in modern animal stories, tells that kindness and gratitude can't be limited to your own species, that all creatures are kin.

Community is shown as fundamental, a given, by the assimilation of animal to human and the mingling as equals that we see in folktale and in such books as *The Wind in the Willows* and *Dr. Dolittle*.

Transformation of man into beast, which in folktales is usually a curse or unhappy spell, in modern stories is more likely to be enlarging and educational, and even, as in the Wart's last great journey, to offer

a glimpse of mystical participation, of an ultimate and eternal communion.

The yearning for a Lost Wilderness that runs through so many animal tales is a lament for the endless landscapes and creatures and species that we have wasted and destroyed. These laments grow urgent, now. We come ever closer to isolating ourselves, a solitary species swarming on a desert world. “Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.”

We go crazy in solitude. We are social primates. Human beings need to belong. To belong to one another, first, of course; but because we can see so far and think so cleverly and imagine so much, we aren't satisfied by membership in a family, a tribe, people just like us. Fearful and suspicious as it is, yet the human mind yearns toward a greater belonging, a vaster identification. Wilderness scares us because it is unknown, indifferent, dangerous, yet it is an absolute need to us; it is that animal otherness, that strangeness, older and greater than ourselves, that we must join, or rejoin, if we want to stay sane and stay alive.

The child is our closest link to it. The storytellers know that. Mowgli and young Wart reach out their hands, the right hand to us and the left hand to the jungle, to the wild beast in the wilderness, to the hawk and the owl and the panther and the wolf; they join us together. The six-year-old spelling out *Peter Rabbit*, the twelve-year-old weeping over *Black Beauty*—they have accepted what so much of their culture denies, and they too reach out their hands to rejoin us to the greater creation, keeping us where we belong. ☺

Ursula K. Le Guin is author of the epic children's fantasy *Earthsea* trilogy: *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), and *The Farthest Shore* (1972). Three later volumes continued the series. She delivered the *Arbuthnot* lecture on April 2, 2004, in Tempe, Arizona.

The Dictionary of Coolness

Why Fantasy Is Cool and Why Ursula K. Le Guin Rules the Roost

Tim Wadham

I'm sure that many of you, like myself, spent your teen years immersed in fantasy, sitting on a couch on a rainy Saturday totally engrossed in an alternative universe, almost forgetting that the cloudy, dreary, real world outside existed.

If you did, I would bet you were reading fantasy because it spoke directly to you, that the stories made you feel something, and were exciting and appealing in ways you probably couldn't explain. And who would have been the writers you would have been reading? Probably J. R. R. Tolkien or C. S. Lewis would have made the list. And very likely you were reading Ursula Le Guin.

Besides creating an archetypal fantasy series through her Earthsea books that laid the groundwork for all who would follow, Le Guin opened the door for the acceptance of fantasy as a vehicle to communicate truly powerful and profound ideas to children. Writing in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, Amanda Craig said of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, "It poses the deep questions about life, death, power, and responsibility that children need answering."

Revisiting the Earthsea books, particularly the initial three, one is struck by the level of sophistication not only in the beauty and complexity of the writing that does not speak down to children, but also at the level of complexity of the spiritual and moral issues Le Guin explores. But I'm not going to write about that.

In her review, Craig also said that *A Wizard of Earthsea* was "The most thrilling, wise, and beautiful children's novel ever; it is written in prose as taut and clean as a ship's sail. Every word is perfect, like the spells Ged has to master."

But to use a far less academic term, *A Wizard of Earthsea* and its sequels are, in a word, cool. What I mean by this specifically is that Le Guin's Earthsea books were, when I read them as a young teenager—and still are—a virtual dictionary of elements that make fantasy appealing to young readers. I

would like to share with you a few entries from my personal "Dictionary of Fantasy Coolness," with definitions provided by Le Guin, to demonstrate how all that is cool about fantasy emanates from Le Guin's Earthsea books. Please note that this list is in random order and is by no means complete.

Story as Legend

Definition: *The story being told is either framed as legend, a tale, or is a story presented in a way that makes clear that the exploits presented will pass into legend. The story can also refer, either at length or in passing, to events in the past—meaning those events that are "past" in the context of the world of the story.*

A Wizard of Earthsea begins and ends by conveying this sense of legend. At the very beginning of the book, Le Guin's storyteller's voice is clearly telling us something that happened a very long time ago: "Of these, some say the greatest, and surely the greatest voyager, was the man called Sparrowhawk, who in his day became both dragonlord and Archmage" (11–12).

A Wizard of Earthsea could end as Le Guin brings Ged and Estarriol back home. But again, Le Guin moves the story into the realm of legend with a brief afterword:

"If Estarriol of Iffish kept his promise and made a song of that first great deed of Ged's, it has been lost. There is a tale told in the East Reach of a boat that ran around, days out from any shore, over the abyss of ocean. In Iffish they say that it was Estarriol who sailed the boat, but in Tok they say it was two fishermen blown by a storm far out on the Open Sea, and in Holp the tale is of a Holpish fisherman, and tells that he could not move his boat from the unseen sands it ground on, and so wanders there yet. So of the song of the Shadow there remain only a few scraps of legend, carried like driftwood

from isle to isle over the long years”
(205).

Throughout *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Le Guin refers to documents, books, stories, and songs that predate her story—the “oldest of all songs,” the Creation of Éa (55), a history, the *Deed of Ged*, which tells Ged’s story. These histories come from a “time before myth” (87) when myth was not even history, but current events. In the story, these legends are passed down through oral tradition as written epics or songs. “His [Ged’s] life,” Le Guin writes, “is told of in the *Deed of Ged* and in many songs but this is a tale of the time before his fame, before the songs were made.” (12)

What makes this cool? Certainly one of the primary appeals is the sense of references to things in the past that are not fully explained and hints of other stories waiting to be told. This coolness is certainly a part of many fantasy novels, and, I have to add, adaptations of fantasy novels. A wonderful extra-literary scene involving ancient lore that I love comes near the beginning of the movie version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* in which Gandalf rushes to the archives to pore over the books of ancient lore where he learns the history of the one ring. But nowhere is this idea as well expressed as in this passage from *A Wizard of Earthsea* that describes a part of a celebration in the Wizard’s school on the island of Roke:

“As the sun rose the next morning the Chanters of Roke began to sing the long *Deed of Erreth-Akbe*, which tells how the white towers of Havnor were built, and of Erreth-Akbe’s journeys from the Old Island Éa, through all the Archipelago and the Reaches, until at last in the uttermost West Reach on the edge of the Open Sea he met the dragon Orm . . .” (69).

This is, of course, not the story, but only a tantalizing glimpse of a whole other tale, which is not in the book. This reference to the lore of Earthsea is incredibly cool, as it not only suggests that Earthsea has a history you would love to research and explore, but it also gives the story an epic sweep, along with the feeling that what you are reading is only a small part of a

much larger and entirely compelling saga.

Ancient Books Full of Spells

Definition: *Spell* (n). A word or formula believed to have magic power.

Ancient books of spells and lore that go back into the times of myth are cool. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ged finds two books like these, lore-books, which his mentor and teacher Ogion “had never yet opened in his presence” (33). “These books were very ancient, Ogion having them from his own master Heleth Farseer, and Heleth from his masters the Mage of Perregal, and so back into the times of myth” (34).

Of course, these books often contain forbidden spells that young magicians-in-training should not use, so of course they sneak into their masters’ rooms when the masters are away to find the prohibited spells in these giant, dusty tomes. There are scenes in other fantasy, like the one I reference here, notably in *The Book of Three* by Lloyd Alexander, but can any be cooler, and yet more frighteningly serious than the moment when young Ged is puzzling over the runes of the spell of summoning, the spell that can summon the spirits of the dead? Ged does this out of pride, and doesn’t realize the seriousness of this until, as he reads the runes, he feels the horror and understands it, and then is approached by his mentor Ogion the Mage, who tells him, “You will never work that spell but in peril of power and your life. Was it for that spell that you opened the book?” (34–35). Of course, as we know, Ged eventually invokes the spell, summoning forth an evil shadow that he then must track, to use Patrick O’Brian’s phrase, to the far side of the world. Evil is also cool, but we’ll get to that in a moment.

Why, then, are books of spells cool? Because they contain words that will unleash the power of magic, they hold secrets, they are closely guarded. And certainly there is that appeal of the forbidden fruit that so appeals to the adolescent mind. And the idea of the books themselves is cool as well; big heavy books, shut with clasps, so old that they threaten to disintegrate as you attempt to turn the

pages, filled with mysterious illustrations and unusual writing. All that power lying on the page, just waiting to be brought to life. This is a wonderful metaphor for the magic of the reading process as well. Speaking of words and language, we move on to the next definition.

The Power of Names

Definition: *Names* (n). A word or words by which an entity is designated and distinguished from others.

One of the themes that informs all of the Earthsea books is the power of language, and particularly of names. “Who knows a man’s name, holds that man’s life in his keeping” (84). In the world of Earthsea, people have a use-name or nickname, such as Ged’s use-name Sparrowhawk. When Vetch gives Ged his true name, Ged is overwhelmed: “Ged stood still a while, like one who has received great news, and must enlarge his spirit to receive it. It was a great gift that Vetch had given him, the knowledge of his true name” (84). Le Guin tells us that the only people who know this true name are the person himself and his namer. You may choose to share your name with a spouse or a relative or a close friend, but those with whom the name is shared will not use the name.

Why is this cool? For one thing, readers are in on the secret; they know the true or secret name, something that creates a powerful bond between the reader and the character. To the adolescent mind, this translates to the search for identity, for finding out who you really are. And then the dilemma becomes, whom do you let in on that secret? To whom can you share your true identity? By couching this idea in terms of language, and most specifically names, Le Guin creates a very resonant metaphor, one that is reiterated in many cultures in coming of age rites and ceremonies in which individuals are named.

Wizardry and Magic

Definition: *Wizardry* (n). A power or effect that appears magical by its capacity to transform.

Long before the Harry Potter series, Ursula Le Guin created a real wizard's school on the island of Roke in the archipelago of Earthsea. And it is at this school that Ged learns to be a wizard. There are also many subcool ideas that form the building blocks of the larger coolness that is wizardry, such as the presence of wise mentors like Ged's, Ogion. In Earthsea, wizards have familiars, such as Ged's otak companion. But, of course, the real appeal here is the working of magic, using the spells to make something happen. Ged is certainly a very human character, a wizard with flaws. But despite his flaws, he is able to call forth the powers within him, as he does the first time he weaves a spell, when he is still called Duny and his village is raided by the Kargs.

"Now need called knowledge out: Duny, seeing the fog blow and thin across the path before the Kargs, saw a spell that might avail him. An old weatherworker of the Vale, seeking to win the boy as prentice, had taught him several charms. One of these tricks was called fogweaving, a binding-spell that gathers the mist together for a while in one place; . . . Thy boy had no such skill, but his intent was different, and he had the strength to turn the spell to his own ends. Rapidly and aloud he named the places and the boundaries of the village, and then spoke the fogweaving charm, but in among its words he enlaced the words of a spell of concealment, and last he cried aloud the word that set the magic going" (21).

I like Ged's line later in this scene when he tells his father, who at first doesn't realize what Ged has done, "I have hidden us all." Wouldn't any young person love to have these powers? And this is certainly one big reason why wizardry is cool. But there is something more to it than that.

In a recent insightful article in *The New York Times*, author James Gorman gives some insights into why Ged is a particularly cool wizard. He says, "[Ged] is an oddity among wizards, at least in modern books . . . he is thoroughly human, causing much of the trouble that he has to fight against.

"He is also . . . the hero of his own saga. . . . Other wizards, like Merlin and Gandalf, tend to be wise guides to small, often foolish young heroes, some with furry feet, some not. Ged, on the other hand, is the hero who comes of age in the Earthsea books, and the struggle over power is a personal one.

"In the end, however, that's a very dry reason to favor a wizard. Ged has all the wizardly chops. He can cause storms, transform himself into a hawk, make light, and split rock. He speaks to dragons. You get the sense that he and his magic are connected to the very heart of the world.

"And that is why he's my favorite: his magic. Wizards and their magic are inseparable. It is the nature of, and the rationale for, Ged's magic that make him so compelling. Gandalf and Merlin appear in their stories as already fully formed wizards, their magic taken for granted.

"Ged, although he has power, has to learn his wizardry. What Ged learns is a language. Magic in the Earthsea stories is built on the true names of things, the words once used to speak his world into existence."

Evil

Definition: Evil (n).

1. *The quality of being morally bad or wrong; wickedness.*
2. *That which causes harm, misfortune, or destruction: a leader's power to do both good and evil.*
3. *An evil force, power, or personification.*
4. *Something that is a cause or source of suffering, injury, or destruction: the social evils of poverty and injustice.*

While Le Guin has recently pointed out in a National Public Radio interview about J. R. R. Tolkien that not all fantasy, and certainly not all of her fantasy, is about the conflict between good and evil, this is still one of the great appeals of much fantasy. In fantasy, the best evil is so overpowering that the reader truly wonders if it can be

overcome. The Shadow that Ged unleashes is one of those types of evil.

"And through that bright misshapen breach clambered something like a clot of black shadow, quick and hideous, and it leaped straight out at Ged's face. . . . It was like a black beast, the size of a young child, though it seemed to swell and shrink; and it had no head or face, only the four taloned paws with which it gripped and tore" (76).

In this image of the Shadow, Le Guin has created perhaps the ultimate evil. And we know how Ged ultimately subdues this evil force by naming it, and discovering that it is him, that it shares his name. This is perhaps the scariest evil of all, the one that comes from within.

Why is this cool? One of the most powerful things about the struggle against evil in fantasy is when the evil is so overpowering, when it hangs over the story like a dark storm cloud, it is an evil that the reader is not sure can be overcome, making any eventual triumph over evil all the more satisfying. Tolkien, of course, created a great sense of foreboding evil in *The Lord of the Rings* with the Ringwraiths on their black horses chasing Frodo and his companions, and the blackness emanating from the tower of Sauron in Mordor. But Le Guin's incarnation of evil has a tremendous coolness factor, especially to the adolescent mind, if you consider the metaphor of the shadow as one that represents the inner demons all young people have to deal with, as they come to see the dark side of themselves, and struggle to accept it and yet at the same time overcome it.

Maps

Definition: Maps (n).

1. *A representation, usually on a plane surface, of a region of the earth or heavens.*
2. *Something that suggests such a representation, as in clarity of representation.*

Fantasy creates places, enchanted places. To know these places they must be

mapped. Maps are cool. It is not insignificant that the Earthsea books, and certainly most fantasy that takes place in an entirely invented world, include maps of that world at the very beginning of the book. Such is the case with *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Le Guin drew this and subsequent maps of Earthsea herself. Earthsea feels like a fully realized place, primarily because there is a map. Le Guin clearly knows the territory and maps it out for the reader. One is tempted to, and often bows to the temptation, to look at the map when places are described in the text. The reader gets his bearings from this physical representation of the world that has been created in Le Guin's mind. The overall map sets the stage for scenes that take place on individual islands in the archipelago, and having the general bearings given to us by the map, Le Guin can concentrate on making these individual places vivid and real. We already know where they exist in space.

Why is this cool? Maps make an imagined land like Earthsea real. It exists because there is a map. But there are places in fantasy that are not mapped, and they are also cool.

Dark Underground Places Where You Might Get Lost

Definition: *Caves. Mines. Passageways. Labyrinths. Intricate structures consisting of interconnecting passages through which it is difficult to find one's way; a maze.*

In *The Tombs of Atuan*, much of the action takes place in the labyrinth only Arha/Tenar and "two of the High Priestesses, and their special servants . . . knew of the existence of this mage that lay beneath every step they took. There were vague rumors of it among the others . . ." (50).

In my early childhood reading, in the world of Oz, L. Frank Baum created the underground world of the Nome King, which was very cool, especially when the Nome King tunneled from his domain all the way to the Emerald City in an attempt to conquer it. Tolkien created an iconic

"dark underground place" in the mines of Moria in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. But could any maze or labyrinth be cooler than the one in Atuan? First of all, it conceals treasure, the ring of Erreth-Akbe, which Ged seeks. The appeal of the labyrinth is clear to Arha/Tenar herself; she is drawn to it. She learns all she can about it. She is shown the spy holes that enter into it, the "miles of tunnels, down there in the dark" (50).

Why is this cool? It's dark; you can't see very well. Actually, in seriousness, the labyrinth is an iconic symbol for, among other things, the unknown, and the unknowable. You may "know" the labyrinth by entering into its stone tunnels, but can you ever know it completely? Again, this has great appeal to adolescents' minds, as they feel they know everything, but at the same time know nothing. But labyrinths yet give hope that they can be successfully navigated. Very close to the idea of labyrinths is my final dictionary entry for this article.

Places Where No One Has Ever Gone

Definition: *A place not explored and perhaps not inhabited. An unknown land, an unexplored region; "they came like angels out [of] the unknown;" "the abyss of the unknown" (Helena Petrovna Blavatsky), "a vast and virtually final terra incognita left to terrestrial explorers" (David F. Salisbury).*

As Vetch and Ged sail in search of the Shadow, they reach the last known islands. "That will be Astowell," Vetch tells Ged, "from the look of it. Lastland. East and south of it the charts are empty."

Ged replies, "Yet they who live there may know of farther lands." When Vetch and Ged reach Astowell they ask the chief, or Isle-Man, "What lies eastward of your land?" After a silence, the old man answers, "The sea." Ged asks, "There is no land beyond?" and the old man replies, "This is Lastland. There is no land beyond. There is nothing but water until the world's edge" (193-94).

What makes this cool? The idea of sailing to the very edge of the world, going where no one has gone before, seeing something that no human being has ever seen is incredibly appealing to the subconscious. C. S. Lewis touched on this desire in his Narnia books, particularly in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in which a journey to the end of the world is undertaken. But none is more striking than Le Guin's, as Lewis' journey is just one to see what is there, but Ged's journey is to heal the world by confronting the evil he himself unleashed in a moment of weakness.

Perhaps the common thread in all of these entries in the dictionary of coolness is that fantasy tells us about the unknown, it takes us to those places beyond the last known island, where no human has ever ventured. And as the reader reads, he goes to that place as if he or she is the only person who goes there. As I was reading Le Guin's books as a teenager, we were both in the same place in our heads. She may have been in Portland, I may have been in Utah, but when I entered the realm of Earthsea, I was in a place that has been explored before me. However, in those moments when I was lost in Le Guin's world, I was the only one, like Ged, striking out beyond the known boundaries of the world we know into the realm of fantasy. ☺

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All definitions from Dictionary.com (Lexico Publishing Group, 2004).

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Autism, Literacy, and Libraries

The 3 Rs = Routine, Repetition, and Redundancy

Lynn Akin and Donna MacKinney



Library

Public and school library media specialists prepare library programming for groups that include special education children. A combination of factors: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a culture of inclusion, and the service ethics of librarianship, compel librarians to reach out to children who struggle with learning or processing problems. Children who have autism comprise one such group.

Research from other disciplines indicates that young people with autism benefit from oral reading, storytimes, multimedia, song, and literacy efforts. The professional expertise of the school library media specialist or the public librarian speaks directly to this group. This research looks at how the library can best serve children with autism. Results were gathered from interviews with autism specialists, a survey, and an analysis of literature on literacy and autism.

Autism

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a constellation of five pervasive developmental disorders including autistic disorder, Rett's Syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, Asperger Syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS).¹

Autism refers to disruptions in development in three main areas: language and communication, social skills, and sensory modalities and behaviors. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* defines communication deficits as a delay of spoken language, stereotyped, repetitive, or idiosyncratic language, and lack of imagination or "make believe." Impaired social interaction can be explained as a failure to make friends, a lack of social or emotional sharing, or a lack of displaying interest by pointing or naming or showing. Finally, behaviors will be repetitive, nonproductive, intense, and characterized by inflexibility.²

Characteristics of autism are usually evident within the first three years of

life, affecting an estimated one in one thousand children. Autism crosses all lines of race, nationality, ethnicity, geography, and economy. More than one million people in America suffer from one of the autistic disorders, and the problem is five times as common as Downs syndrome and three times as common as juvenile diabetes.³

It is not possible to specify the particular set of behaviors or skills that will be exhibited by any individual autistic child, as no two ASD children are exactly alike.⁴ Expect to see disruptions in the areas of social skills, language development, uneven intellectual development, unpredictable interests, and possible motor and sensory processing difficulties. Within each of those areas there will be tremendous variation from child to child.

Social Skills

The social behavior of autistic children usually falls into one of three general categories: aloof, passive, or active and odd. The aloof child avoids physical or visual contact with others; there will be little demonstration of joint attention (attending to an object or event by following the gaze or pointing gesture of another person), and any interaction with a peer or adult is strictly instrumental.

Passive characteristics include not seeking social interaction, not interpreting gestures or facial expressions, and not using functional speech. The active and odd presentation is manifested by the child who actively seeks out interaction with others but often misinterprets cues and responds inappropriately, perhaps awkwardly or aggressively.⁵

Frequently, children with ASD have difficulty starting a project, task, or activity because beginning new tasks requires motivation, organization, and transition—difficult issues for an ASD child. Children with ASD have a high need for sameness, predictability, and routine. Activity cues help the child move from one activity to another. Picture activity schedules (picture cues used to show

what will happen next) in school eased transfer from one activity to another, increased student performance, and performance dropped when the activity schedules were removed. In general, a substantial body of research supports the use of such picture activity cues (see Mayer-Johnson www.mayer-johnson.com for examples) as an excellent way to support routine and repetition and aid transitions.⁶

Language Development

Children with ASD may have language skills that range from nonverbal to extensive vocabularies. They frequently exhibit echolalia, a speech pattern that involves repetition of the speech of others, whether immediate or delayed.⁷ Occasionally a child with no functional verbal skills quotes the dialogue of an entire movie, complete with songs. Children with mature sounding speech skills do not necessarily comprehend everything an adult says, or all that they say themselves. Sometimes children with ASD develop a repertoire of phrases such as, "Are you hungry?" (when the child himself was in fact, hungry) or possibly the child uses "Are you hungry?" or other rote phrases in nonsensical ways. The grammar is correct; the context is not.

Uneven Intellectual Development

It is important to note that a child with autism is not necessarily mentally retarded but will definitely have uneven skill development.⁸ Autism can occur in combination with any other disability, or as a distinct and singular disorder. A librarian may be confused by a child who can speak articulately but who is unable to use the toilet independently.



Storyteller

Unpredictable Interests

Autistic children often pass through periods of extreme preoccupation with certain skills, activities, or materials. Pervasive behavior such as lining up a group of dinosaurs or vehicles in a very specific way is typical. Once an academic skill is acquired, the child may obsess on it by calling out letters or numbers. If the librarian attempts to actively disrupt this behavior, the perseverator may become agitated.

Motor and Sensory Processing Difficulties

Many children with ASD exhibit self-stimulatory (stim) behaviors. These can be full body rocking, flicking fingers, flapping arms, or any repetitive nonproductive physical behavior.⁹ Some autistic children experience hypo- or hypersensitivity to noise, textures, or smells common in schools or libraries, such as the odor of clay or finger paint. ASD children need clear boundaries. Open spaces, such as hallways and gyms, require adaptive behaviors such as walking along the wall, or sitting sideways in a chair.

Instructional Techniques

Library literature has not closely examined how the library can best serve autistic children. The library and information studies field writes about the mentally retarded, the learning disabled, and the physically challenged. Issues regarding special needs services are discussed, as are specific learning disabilities such as attention deficit disorder, information disorders, and bipolar disorder.¹⁰ Since school library media specialists or public librarians may create programs for children with special needs, a focus or a direction would be helpful to the librarian who is uncertain of how to proceed.

There are several current theories on literacy and children with autism. Research yields a link between increasing literacy efforts, such as guided reading and improved skill levels in autistic children. Studies of read-alouds show the autistic child benefits from oral readings and may be able to uncover story structure. A child who is literate can represent things, feelings, and thoughts into language and

then into narratives. Autistic children have impaired ability to access imagination, yet a study of storytelling ability found that with a free storytelling method, ASD children could produce imaginative elements.¹¹ Literacy techniques include related readings, directive scaffolding, social stories, technology, peer tutoring, and music therapy.

Related Readings

The concept of related readings involves presenting a unit of stories all related by a common theme or character. Rabbit stories formed the basis in Colasent and Griffith's 1998 study that tested literacy questions, recall levels, and behaviors of autistic students upon experiencing a series of related stories.¹² The related readings stress the concept being learned and repeat the lesson.

In repeated storybook readings (RSR), the storybooks provide an arena for joint attention and turn taking.¹³ Illustrated storybooks are very effective as the child learns to focus on the pictures, and narrow the avenue of referents. Initially it is important to have the word and the picture in close proximity. In other words, the child associates the picture of the tree and the word "tree." Repeated tellings of the same story help the child focus attention, build vocabulary, inculcate the structure of literary experiences, and develop social skills, such as page turning.

Related Reading Materials and Formats

In terms of materials, all formats—videos, audiocassettes, books, kits, toys, games, computer software, puppets, and children's and young adult magazines in alternative formats—should be collected. Books using repetitive language are an excellent choice for a read-aloud. *Including Families of Children with Special Needs* offers lists of resources, publishers, and Web sites to use when developing a collection of materials for children with special needs. Picture dictionaries or word books are recommended, and while a picture dictionary does not lend itself to a story time alone, it definitely supports a themed program.¹⁴

Older autistic children may prefer to read calendars, atlases, phone books, encyclo-

pedias, and nonfiction.¹⁵ Autistic children can read for pleasure, but they almost never read stories with elaborate plots and highly developed characters. Some ASD children will be happy reading the same book repeatedly. An effective teacher or librarian should reinforce new topics by linking them to established favorites.

RSR with Directive Scaffolding

Directive scaffolding refers to a series of questions asked in a reliable order, sometimes referred to as IRE, or initiation-response-evaluation. The inquiries provide cloze questions (the reader pauses for

Skills learned in the school library can be transferred into the local public library and then extended into other community situations. Skills learned in the public library transfer back to school, and a cycle of success is arranged.

the child to provide the answer), binary choices (is it this or that?), expansions (reader elaborates on child's answer), and constituents, or wh- questions (who, what, where, when). This type of directive scaffolding helps the child develop concepts and communication competence. Initial research, with a very small sample, indicated that RSR would be successful with children who already have some verbal skills. Introduction of wh- questions showed increases in communication skills in autistic children.¹⁶

In any test of comprehension or reading levels, hyperlexia should be ruled out. Hyperlexia refers to the ability to read well and to read every word, and yet have no significant comprehension of context.¹⁷ Autistic readers in one study had developmentally appropriate comprehension but extraordinary reading speeds. Researchers suggested that autistic readers decode the text rapidly by following linguistic rules.¹⁸ In certain cases, "hyperlexia is the written word's equivalent of echolalia."¹⁹ A child may demonstrate very rapid reading skills, and the librarian would do well to examine how much of the material made sense to the autistic reader. Retellings

might be an effective way to measure comprehension.

Social Stories

Social stories illustrate a problem or situation, and then explicitly present the appropriate behavior so children learn common social conventions. Social stories are particularly helpful for ASD students that are mainstreamed. A social story is structured more like a list or script than the narrative form of a typical story. One study of autistic boys used social stories about hand washing with the added element of multimedia.²⁰ The multimedia component contained text, movies,

audio read-aloud, and navigation buttons with generally successful results. Social stories tend to have an ordinariness about them. Similar to social stories are comic strip conversations, where the use of thought bubbles help the ASD child understand what the other person is thinking.²¹ Social stories can be used to illustrate very basic activities, such as hand washing, to complex social interactions, such as taking turns when reading a book with another person. While not a common element in library story times, social stories are a useful tool for establishing group norms and behaviors for any child, as well as those children who have social deficits.

Interactive Multimedia Technology

Computer technology works well with special education children. Studies demonstrate that autistic children exhibit less disruptive or stim behaviors when using computers, and they experience increases in attending, response time, and problem solving. Interactive reading programs showed a significant increase in enjoyment by the autistic students and also stimulated verbal expression.²²

Another use of technology is to locate a favorite storybook adaptation on closed-caption television or on a captioned video. The child can see and hear the words at the same time and learn to read. Additional research indicates that fast-paced games did not help autistic children, but talking books on CD-ROM and computerized simulations did lead to literacy increases.

A high number of autistic people show a marked preference for visual stimulation over auditory. For literate autistic children, word processing may be easier than verbal communication. Temple Grandin, assistant professor at Colorado State University and an autistic, stated she thinks in pictures and not in language and actually titled her book *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism* (Bantam, 1995).

Peer Tutoring

Research shows that pairing a nonautistic reader with an autistic student works satisfactorily and can increase the autistic child's reading skills. One study researched a peer-tutoring situation, which consisted of twenty-five minutes of organized activities in which tutor-learner pairs worked. Results revealed an increase in reading fluency and correct responses to comprehension questions by the autistic students. Additional work with kindergarten children and multiple peer tutors showed that the peer buddy approach increased appropriate social interactions by the ASD children.²³

The authors of this research however, find reasons to carefully consider placing the autistic child in such a situation because peer approaches require careful planning and implementation by well-trained staff. Our caution here is that the librarian, rather than the teacher or parent, directs the peer tutoring. The school library media specialist or the public librarian has sporadic contact with the child and may not be familiar with the signals of the autistic child's tolerance for social interaction.

Music Therapy

Therapists regularly and successfully use music and art strategies with ASD chil-



Sing

dren. While therapeutic intervention is certainly outside the professional jurisdiction of the school or public librarian, many library programs for elementary-aged children include drawing and singing. This will work just as effectively with the ASD child.

Music represents another style of communication and the song itself can be packed with context, environmental cues, movement, or pauses. If the song requires passing an object to one another, social skills are strengthened. If the song stresses movement or physical activity, coordination improves. The song can be paired with an object relating to the lesson, thus connecting the content element of the library visit. Old standards such as “itsy bitsy spider” and “open shut them” remain popular as both song and finger play.²⁴

Creating classroom or library songs is time consuming, but the songs are repetitive in nature and certain lines of lyric may be repeated over and over, thus they are perfect for the child with autism. If the school includes a regular music therapist, the librarian will want to consult this person to create songs that reinforce library skills.

A caveat to any of these learning strategies is that they should be individually selected, rather than as an overused prescription.²⁵ If in a school, refer to the modifications specified in the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). The range of autism requires an individual approach to best serve the needs of the child. However, the school library media specialist and the public librarian can choose among these strategies in order to maximize the students’ library experiences.

Voices of Experience

An informal survey of faculty and staff in the Dallas, Texas, area who work primarily with autistic children inquired about common practices in literacy, books, and use of community spaces.²⁶ Teachers remarked on circle time, videos, books, songs, movements, and the library.

Circle Time

The teachers used circle time and on average, the groups included six to seven children. Two-thirds of the teachers included songs and finger plays in their program. While the teachers did not use the library, the circle time can be easily replicated in the library setting.

Videos

Many of the teachers included short videos. This not only appeals to the strong visual needs of many children with autism but also allows the teacher or librarian a bit of freedom to focus on the student’s reactions and to move about the circle as needed, encouraging participation. Some noted that while their students do not typically model each other’s behavior, they would sometimes model the behavior observed on videos. Iconographic videos (videos of the exact pages of the book) paired with their source book (*Dr. Seuss’s ABC*, for example) provide a link from video format to traditional books.

Books

Teachers routinely used short books (five minutes was the most common length measured in read-aloud time) with animal characters (Berenstain Bears, Arthur, and Maisy, for example). Books with human characters comprised the next category. Books based on anthropomorphic characters like Thomas from *Thomas the Tank Engine*, or *Toy Story* characters proved very attractive.

Whatever the theme, survey respondents experienced the most success with books having a low ratio of words to pictures and rhyming text, as seen in *Mice Are Nice*. Concrete themes and clear endings were preferred over abstract concepts or

open-ended plots. The children responded most consistently to books with bright, colorful illustrations rather than those with pastel or black-and-white drawings.

The experienced teachers relied on fiction stories, which are more readily available from the library media center, but nonfiction read-alouds served to focus in on appropriate subjects. Short, visually appealing informational books like the Adler biographies, the Eyewitness Books series and the Dorling Kindersley Readers series meet the general criteria for success with children with ASD while providing needed subject area content.

Some books effectively support social and behavioral goals and can also be combined with social stories. For instance, *Maisy Drives the Bus* could be paired very easily with *Riding a Bus* or *How to Board a City Bus* from the *Original Social Story Book*.²⁷ Another example is *Fractions* by Michele Koomen, paired with a social story about sharing, and perhaps a picture dictionary definition of sharing. Either one of these examples could form the basis for an effective, content-rich, library program.

Combining short social stories with picture books works particularly well in the mixed-age setting of public library story times. Since social stories are usually short and to the point, they often speak to the developmentally younger attendees, while picture books with longer text entertain more mature listeners.

Movement and Song

The teachers stressed the need for manipulatives, songs, and stories that encourage interaction and movement, including the use of activity schedules. Survey respondents remarked that visual strategies effectively compensated for the weaker auditory learning modality of ASD students. Finally, teachers found that consistency in the environment and adherence to routine in programming will promote success for children with ASD.

Community Space

Although the survey asked about the use of a community space, such as the library, no

one mentioned the library as a place where they take their students. One survey respondent stated she did not take her class to the library because they felt uncomfortable. Another former teacher remarked that when she introduced herself to the librarian and mentioned that she would be teaching the ASD children, the librarian said, "Oh, I won't be seeing your children."

Model Programming

School library programs designed for autistic children support the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals for each student. Use of the library by children with ASD would, in general, facilitate their social functioning, provide a skill set to be employed at the library, and environmental cues on how to behave while at the library.

The ideal thirty-minute program employs the three Rs: routine, repetition, and redundancy. Consistent routine increases the comfort level of autistic children. Obvious cues orient the children to transitions in the program and repetition of these cues increases the child's comfort level. In fact, redundant programming encourages overall cooperation and independence.

So it makes sense that the ideal thirty-minute program follows the same routine: begin with *activity schedules*, perform an *environmental scan*, select *themed programming* using the best *resources and materials* selected specifically for this group, employ *scaffolding techniques*, read *social stories*, prepare *supplemental activities*, use *interactive technology*, and have an *ending ritual*.

Activity Schedules

Activity schedules allow the child with ASD to engage in a series of tasks by following visual cues, usually pictures and/or words. Activity cues help introduce the child to symbolic communication systems other than speech. Picture schedules, object schedules, or word cards can be used to help the child understand the sequence of the library program, including the beginning and end.²⁸ Picture cards by Mayer-Johnson have been used throughout this article so the reader can see examples.

A sample "start" may involve having the children put their library cards in the "begin" basket. Similarly, the children will rely on a marker for the end. The simple phrase "the end" accompanied with a behavior, such as putting materials in the "finish" bucket will punctuate the chronology of a library visit. Maintain these markers consistently and regularly because the child depends upon them. Accompany each transition with a tangible cue. This can be a word or picture card (laminated to withstand wear) or a small object (like a plastic dinosaur if the story's subject is dinosaurs), selected to cue the specific activity or support the program theme.²⁹

Environment Scan

All children, particularly children with autism, benefit from repetition and regularity as they build a repertoire of library-related skills and orient themselves to many different stimuli, both internal and external. Children with ASD suffer stress and anxiety when faced with even minimal change.³⁰ Initially they experience the library as a new environment and must become accustomed to each facet. The environment will have to be learned. Keeping the environment, the activities, and the expectations routine helps the children.³¹ Make the rules available visually and explicitly model the desired behaviors.

Observe the library before the children arrive to make sure it looks the same as it did last time. Greet the children the same way, sit in the same chair, and follow the same sequence. This aids the children in relaxing, anticipating, and enjoying the library visit. Even then, if a fluorescent light is flickering, or a printer is humming, or some new external stimuli intrudes, highly sensitive children may not be able to tolerate the visit and need to leave.³² The librarian cannot control this but should be aware that it may happen, that it does not mean the program is a failure, nor does it mean the other children are not enjoying the program.

Themed Programming

Choose the themed program carefully because you will repeat it. If the school or public librarian sees the children once a week for thirty minutes, some elements

of the program should be repeated for at least three weeks. Perhaps the beginning and ending stories will be consistent, or certain songs or finger plays will be repeated as transitions between stories. Here the RSR (repeated storybook readings) practice becomes a key element of the library visit.

With respect to materials, follow the survey recommendations and the suggestions from the literature review in selecting books and resources for the library visit. Select books carefully and make sure that the book has good read-aloud value, repeated thematic emphasis, and content-rich pictures, so minor variants can be added to the library lesson.

While reading the story, use dramatics. Voice changes, tone, rate of speech, and even pausing will attract interest and promote eye contact as you catch the attention of the children.³³ An introduction to the story using a related tangible object helps an anxious child focus. Repeat this same introduction for every reading.

Scaffolding

The librarian should experiment to discover what types of questions are most likely to elicit responses. Simple binary "yes-no" questions might be the best place to start and then slowly move into more involved questions. One aspect of scaffolding is that the librarian controls the types of questions asked. Do not allow a child to perseveratively discuss or ask questions about isolated incidents. Limit this behavior to a specified time and remind the child often, if necessary.



Librarian

Social Stories

Social stories help the autistic child learn a social skill in simple words. If, for example, the library visit focuses on dinosaurs, a social story on going to the museum fits nicely. The Jennison Public Schools (Mich.) assembled a book of social stories with titles like “getting dressed” or “thunderstorms” or “riding a bus.” Examples like these can be themed to any library program and used successfully.

Supplemental Themed Activities

Reading the same small book several times, with related activities, will only take about fifteen minutes. If the story-time group includes children on diverse developmental levels who might become bored with too much repetition, the librarian can encourage them to join her on repeated readings or point to key words or phrases and have the children read them.

Make sure to plan finger plays, music, and perhaps a short video. If the children visit the library for thirty minutes, the librarian has an opportunity to enlarge the theme and reinforce additional library skills. Preselect books and place them on tables for browsing and quiet reading. Expect the children to stay seated and look at the books. The children will see the “sitting and looking and page-turning” behaviors mirrored by other visitors in the library. This behavior adapts well, and the children will recognize its appropriateness.³⁴ It also gives the children another success in social skills.

Interactive Technology

Many studies support the use of computer technology for children with learning disabilities. Autistic children are no different. If the themed story had been about colors, the librarian could use color recognition games and software on the computer. Older children may be able to use search engines to search out Internet sites about colors. An effort to include peer tutoring might work with students paired up at the computer. But public and school librarians should proceed only with the approval of either the teacher or the parent.

Ending Ritual

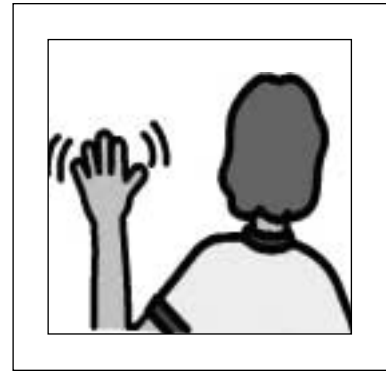
A clean-up time produces activities such as replacing chairs, cleaning work areas, and lining up. Repeating the sequence helps the child know that “the end” is approaching. The child will need a “the end” to mark the conclusion of an activity. The ending activities will be clear and done exactly when the visit has concluded. The librarian may use a cue of her choice, whether it be a clean-up song, a small behavior such as a wave, or a sticker. But the librarian should be prepared to repeat this cue regularly and often and in exactly the same way for each library visit.

Evaluation

The librarian who seeks overt responses to a library story-time visit may not find such validation with autistic children. However, observing the children, questioning the teacher or parent, relying on traditional measures, and performing a self-check can provide feedback. Evaluation should be carefully planned and scheduled into the program on a regular basis.³⁵

Children with ASD may or may not verbally indicate enjoyment of the story time. However, an absence of distress indicates that the child accepts the activity. The ASD child may reduce self-stimulatory activities or make brief eye contact. There may be evidence of an increased attention span that signifies tolerance of the library visit. During the library program, the children may respond to simple yes-no questions about the story, or they may fill in an answer if you prompt, then pause. There is no way to identify a common set of autistic deficits, thus there is no way to anticipate a particular set of positive responses.

Always ask the classroom teacher or parent for comments. Seek out suggestions for what to change, what to avoid, and how to improve the program. “Coordination and collaboration appear to be more than worth the effort, and without these two ingredients, a successful program is unlikely to emerge.”³⁶ The authors believe that asking the teacher or parent, who knows the child best, will provide the most informed opinion about the success of the program.



Goodbye

Traditional library evaluation measures can also be used. If you do a program on animals, check to see if materials on animals are checked out. Have the students asked related questions about animals? Ask the children to draw a picture of the library visit, and see what the drawings magnify or minimize. Can the children remember your name? Do the children ask for books on other subjects? How does the library look after the children leave? Can you tell they used the library or does it appear untouched? Do the children remember the words to the songs?

Another evaluation technique is to use a grid worksheet targeting specific areas of library skills or behaviors.³⁷ The worksheet might aim for areas such as “listens to the story,” “answers successfully when called upon,” “raises hand,” “mirrors book handling behaviors,” “demonstrates appropriate library behaviors,” and so on. If the school library media specialist is working with the teacher, the two can determine the focus of the evaluation plan. The school media professional can keep a running worksheet showing how the children are doing during library visits. Longitudinal data will highlight where small changes in the program might be made without disrupting the consistent routine. Repeat what works well . . . often.

Make sure your interactions with the children have been positive and encouraging. Be consistent, calm, low key, direct, and patient. Analyze changes in the children’s behavior from visit to visit. Do not be discouraged; this is a slow process, and gains are small and incremental.

The professional librarian will want to develop resources on autism for personal

use and development. Several reputable Web sites, including www.autism.org, www.teacch.com, or Autism-PDD Resources Network at www.autism-pdd.net, will provide information, bibliographies, and teaching tips.

Conclusion

Librarians are instrumental in introducing an underserved population to the joys and routine of a library visit. Skills learned in the school library can be transferred into the local public library and then extended into other community situations. Skills learned in the public library transfer back to school, and a cycle of success is arranged. Librarians have an opportunity to make a real contribution to the lives of children who face many challenges. Seize the chance and make a difference. ☺

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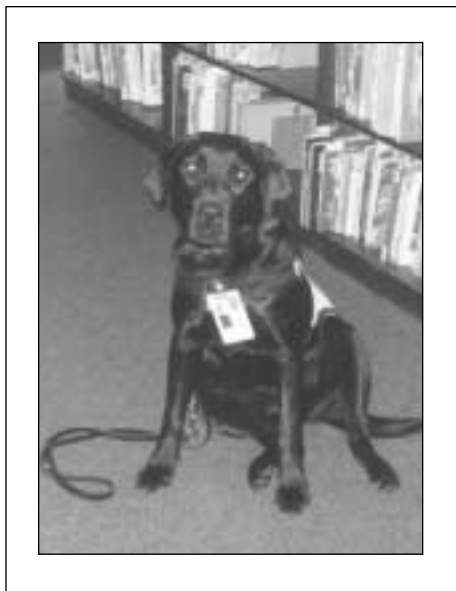
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Who's the Four-Legged Librarian?

Upland Public Library Trains a Guide Dog

Ann-Marie Biden



Amelia at attention!

I am a children's librarian, so my story begins "Once upon a time . . ."

A few years ago, with one son in the Navy and the other in college, my husband and I were ready for a new challenge. Empty nest syndrome had hit, but I had just the thing to cure it . . . raise a guide-dog puppy for someone less fortunate. It would be fun, worthwhile, and fill some of those hours the kids used to demand.

There was just one problem. How could I take the puppy to work at a library—not exactly the place one would expect to encounter a dog! As I thought more about it, I realized a public library was exactly the appropriate place to raise a guide dog. Wasn't the mission of the public library to provide access to information? Wasn't a guide for the visually impaired the ultimate provision of information to literally the entire world?

Confident in my new inspiration, I approached my library director who embraced the idea with enthusiasm, agreeing that the whole experience would be valuable not only for the staff but also for library patrons and the community as a whole. After getting approval from the city's risk management official, my husband and I applied to Guide Dogs of America (GDA) in Sylmar, California. After we passed a home inspection, we were approved as puppy raisers, placed on a waiting list and attended monthly meetings to acquaint us with the program and our responsibilities. Five months later, we introduced our new four-legged librarian.

Getting Ready

While we waited for our puppy, we were busy preparing the library, the staff, and the public for our new arrival. We designed a brochure for the public. A former aide and talented artist designed our logo—a Labrador retriever holding a book with a map of the world on it. Surrounding the logo were the words: Providing Access to the World: Puppies And Libraries (P.A.W.P.A.L.S.)

The brochure explained the process of socializing a guide-dog-in-training and the public's role in that process. Specifically, the puppy could not be petted, played with, or otherwise distracted while she was wearing her identifying yellow jacket unless we gave patrons permission. This would teach the dog that when she was "working," she was to concentrate solely on her person, not seek out the attention of others.

We published an article in our local news magazine, *The Muni News*, as well as in our children's department's monthly calendar. I explained the process to the staff at our monthly meeting, setting down guidelines for visiting, petting, and feeding. Finally, I puppy-proofed the office where our puppy would be spending most of her time, at least for the first few weeks.

But one thing remained . . . what to name her? Since she was going to be a children's librarian, her name had to be familiar to the kids. And since she came from the "A" litter, it had to begin with the letter "A." We made a list of children's book characters that fit the bill, and Amelia Bedelia was the favorite. Amelia she was!

Puppy Love

In October 2002 we picked up eight-week-old Amelia at the GDA campus and met her black Lab siblings: Autumn, Angie, Andy, August, and Alex.

The first week at the library was challenging, but Amelia quickly adapted to a schedule of sleep, potty and exercise breaks, play, more sleep, then home at lunch time. She slept under my desk in the children's office, learning that she must stay near her person at all times. I slowly introduced her to the public by carrying her through the library as well as walking her on her leash, riding with her in the elevator, and gradually walking up and down the stairs, all important experiences for a guide dog. I also let her visit with the children at the end of story times.

Being around children was a great experience for Amelia, the children,

and their parents. After the first of the year, we started Amelia's After-School Adventure, a story time for children ages five to nine. The children loved having her, and I explained that they were helping her learn to be a good guide dog by providing many distractions she had to learn to ignore. Amelia quickly became the "library dog," a name I often hear to this day when we're strolling through a store and someone (usually a child or a teen) yells, "Hey! There's the library dog!"

In the Doghouse

I thought I had puppy-proofed the office, then reality set in. I'll never forget the look of mixed glee and terror on Amelia's face the day I walked in after having left her alone for perhaps five minutes. Always tethered to the desk, Amelia couldn't wander off, and there was nothing within her reach she could chew. However, I'd simply underestimated her reach. There she sat surrounded by a stack of books she'd managed to pull off my desk. Luckily, she'd only gotten to the cover of one book that could easily be replaced.

We learned from that experience, and thanks to a fabulously supportive and understanding staff and patrons, other little accidents became whimsical stories to share. For example, Amelia didn't always make it outside for her potty breaks. Her most famous faux pas occurred in the elevator. Luckily, no one was waiting to get on as I raced for the paper towels and sanitizing spray. And it was a delight to watch the looks of surprised puzzlement on patrons' faces when, out of the blue in the morning quiet of the library, came puppy barks and whines—Amelia decided she'd simply had enough of being patient and wanted to go home!

Safety Concerns

More and more these days, we hear about dogs and libraries, particularly in regard to reading therapy programs where children read to certified therapy dogs in a pleasant and nonjudgmental atmosphere. These programs are proving popular and successful for many



Amelia with some of her storytime friends.

libraries and patrons. Most people consider children, dogs, and reading a winning combination.

But certain valid concerns need to be addressed, such as the possibility of dog bites and patron allergies. We addressed these issues at our staff meetings and in the brochure. GDA insures their puppies for any injury caused due to dog bites. GDA staff is not aware of any claims since its inception in 1948. The dogs are specifically bred for many traits, among them gentleness and a good nature. And the nature of the program limits contact between the dogs and the public.

Allergies and/or a fear of dogs can also pose problems in a public setting. Puppies must be kept clean, bathed, and groomed, and we will gladly remove Amelia to an enclosed office should anyone with a fear of dogs or an allergy wish to use the children's area. This has happened once; a woman politely asked me to remove Amelia from the area since she believed her allergies might be activated. But even she was very supportive of the program and wished us well.

Occasionally, a child will ask if Amelia bites. I gently reassure him that, no, she would never dream of biting and loves everyone, especially little children. We have had parents thank us for introducing their children to a kind and good-

natured dog; that, in turn, allayed their children's fear of dogs.

Tail-Wagging Times: Out and About

From the day we got Amelia, my husband and I took her out in public. She went to the market, snuggled in the baby seat of the grocery cart; to fast-food restaurants, where she learned to curl up on her blanket, chew a bone, and ignore the smells and other distractions; and to department stores, where she learned to walk beside us and wait patiently while we shopped.

At work, we gradually introduced Amelia to increasing amounts of time at the children's reference desk. At first, there was some barking or whimpering when I would leave to assist a patron, but a spray water bottle taught her that librarians don't whimper!

Every day, Amelia and I made it a point to "see and be seen," to wander and visit with staff and patrons. Soon I was able to leave Amelia in other sections of the library where she could visit with staff while being separated from me. Our favorite spot was behind the circulation desk where she could watch patrons check out books.

We often walked across our courtyard to city hall at break times to visit other city

employees. On one of these visits, Amelia became an official City of Upland employee. Recently, as a security measure, all employees—even the police dog—began to wear photo I.D. cards. We felt Amelia should have one as well. Jumping handily onto a chair and striking a pose even a supermodel would appreciate, Amelia returned to the library proudly sporting her official photo identification badge. She wears it attached to her collar every day.

Our Proud Moments

Our summer reading program participation rose by fourteen percent after our honorary “jaguar” accompanied us on our visits to promote last summer’s “Swing Into Your Library” rainforest-themed program. I have no doubt that the sight of a black Labrador retriever sporting a spotted fake fur jacket stuck in quite a few of those little minds!

Amelia has attended professional meetings and workshops with me, but perhaps our proudest moment came last November when we presented a session at the California Library Association (CLA) convention in Ontario. The little whiny puppy under the desk had grown into a mature and confident companion, nearly ready to take the next big step in her training at the GDA school in Sylmar. Her turn-in date had been scheduled for Valentines Day, 2004.

The Ripple Effect

When you cast a stone into a pond, the biggest splash occurs in the middle, the spot where the stone lands. Yet the effect of the stone’s landing sends seemingly endless ripples out across the surface of the water. This is how I see the effect of raising Amelia in our library. At the center

are our family and the staff of the library. Beyond are the city, the greater community, the library community, and, last but certainly not least, the person who will receive Amelia as a guide.

Besides accompanying me to work at the library, Amelia accompanied my husband and me on a road trip through six states last summer (she’s a great traveler!). She rides the MetroLink train with my husband each Friday to his office. We have visited countless museums, libraries, theaters, restaurants, a California Angels baseball game, a whale-watching expedition, and even Disneyland, where she

work with Amelia at the library: minimal; amount of time needed to tend to Amelia at the library: minimal. Great PR for the library: priceless!

The staff of Upland Public Library has become a group surrogate mother to Amelia. They provide love and discipline at her home away from home. She knows them all by sight and smell. Prior to our CLA presentation, I asked staff members to complete a survey about their feelings about raising a guide dog puppy in the library. I requested both positive and negative feedback, allowing staff to remain anonymous.



Ann-Marie Biden and Amelia, with her city employee ID.

rode on Pirates of the Caribbean, the Haunted Mansion, and, her favorite ride, The Jungle Cruise. She has met Mickey Mouse and Cinderella, Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny, and was chased by an angry flock of geese at *their* lake.

Our forays into Upland and surrounding cities include everything from formal talks to trips to Wal-Mart. I don’t think there has been a time when we’ve been out and have not been asked a question or responded to a comment about Amelia and the guide-dog program. These are wonderful opportunities to extend an invitation to visit the library. With apologies to Master Card, salary expended to

The response was all positive, and staff unanimously agreed to train another dog once Amelia left us to begin her intensive training at GDA.

We provided a similar survey for patrons; results were much the same. I was quite moved by many of the remarks complimenting both the library and the city for embracing the project. Parents thanked us for exposing their children to the concept of canine helpers, which opened up discussions about people with impairments. Many also shared that their children thought it was very cool that there was a “library dog.” One family has become puppy raisers themselves because of P.A.W.P.A.L.S.

Perhaps my fondest memories are of the middle-school boys who visit the library weekly from their small schools for students with learning disabilities. Their tough-guy posturing melts at the sight of Amelia, and I always let them pet her after we read a story together. I often silently hope that this small, yet loving, experience will stick with them so they’ll have positive memories of libraries, books, librarians who cared, and a big black dog who loved their caresses and kind words.

A number of encounters stand out in my mind: The mother of a blind child made a

point of stopping and thanking me and other puppy raisers for working with these dogs. I gave her a card and told her that her daughter could get a guide dog when she turned sixteen. I recall a woman we met at the impressionist art exhibit at the county art museum who was slowly losing her sight. She was trying to take in as much of the world's beauty as she could in her remaining sighted time. She was considering getting a guide dog and wondered about the school and the training. At the same exhibit, an elderly lady commented on Amelia's behavior and decided then and there to include Guide Dogs of America in her will.

My favorite exchange was in line at Target. As I loaded my purchases onto the counter and Amelia rested at my feet, I overheard the woman behind me patiently explain to her two young children why Amelia was allowed in the store and the significance of her yellow jacket. After listening quietly, the young girl innocently replied, "But I thought she was the library dog." It turned out she had been at one of those school assemblies when a certain black Lab disguised as a jaguar helped to bark the praises of the summer reading program!

The final and most important beneficiary of our program will be the person who receives Amelia as a guide dog. How can we give her up? Someone else needs her more than we do. We started P.A.W.P.A.L.S. predicated on the belief that the public library is a logical place to raise a guide-dog puppy since we provide access to information and guide dogs provide entree to the world for the visually impaired.

My dream has been to have Amelia and her person return to the library someday to share their experiences with those who raised and love her.

Future Possibilities

When we first inquired about puppy raising, we were astounded to learn

that only half of the puppies eventually graduate as guide dogs. Those dogs must be nearly perfect in every aspect of their being: physical, behavioral, and emotional. When a dog is dropped from the guide dog program, many go on to be certified therapy dogs, companion dogs, or cherished family pets of the puppy raisers. Only 1 percent are chosen as breeder dogs. They are the "cream of the crop" who will provide puppies for the future of the program. Those dogs remain with their puppy raisers and only return to the guide-dog school to be bred, give birth, and nurse their pups until they are weaned. Imagine our surprise when we learned Amelia was to be tested for breeding!

We were all on pins and needles wondering what Amelia's future would be. The tests took all of January, then the evaluation process began. By the end of February, my nerves were frazzled. In June, much to our delight, we learned Amelia would have a litter in July. She gave birth to six puppies.

And They All Lived Happily Ever After

I am a children's librarian, so my story ends "and they all lived happily ever after." Of course I was at the children's public reference desk when the call came from Louise Henderson, director of the puppy-raising program at GDA. Amelia would be a breeder for the guide-dog program!

Amelia will continue to be our "library dog." Her jacket will no longer say "Puppy in Training" but will simply sport the name and logo of GDA. She will live with us but return to the GDA school whenever she comes into heat. She will be bred four times, once per year, then spayed after that time. Her puppies will remain at the GDA nursery where, at eight weeks old, they will begin their adventures with puppy raisers just like their mom did a few short years ago.

Our story has a fairy-tale ending we never imagined. Our four-legged librarian will continue to attend story times as well as work at the children's reference desk. When she grows a bit plump, I suppose we'll have a little explaining to do! Our P.A.W.P.A.L.S. program has taken an unexpected, but certainly not unwelcome, turn. Indeed, instead of providing just one guide dog, we'll be instrumental in providing many.

The late author and publisher Katherine Graham said, "To love what you do and feel that it matters—how could anything be more fun?" At the Upland Public Library, we're loving what we do, we know that it matters, and can you tell we're having fun? Fairy tale indeed! ☺

Ann-Marie Biden is a children's librarian at Upland Public Library in Upland, Calif. She can be reached via e-mail at ambiden@ci.upland.ca.us.

Learn more about the guide dogs program at www.guidedogsofamerica.org.

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Beginning Again

Jane Breskin Zalben Teams with
Husband for Daring New Book

Sharon Korbeck



Illustration from *Saturday Night at the Beastro* (HarperCollins, 2004)



How can an author/illustrator with more than fifty published books feel like she's "beginning again?"

For Jane Breskin Zalben, it simply means taking chances, shifting focus . . . and working with her husband.

"After being alone in a room for thirty years, it's nice to have other people in your brain with you," said Jane, who has spent much of a three-decade career enchanting readers through children's books. Many of her titles, like the familiar Beni series, illustrate the familial warmth of Jewish traditions and holidays.

Those "other people" Jane refers to is her husband of more than thirty years, Steve. This year marks a watershed moment in the Zalben family. Jane and Steve—alternately in love with fine food, fancy wordplay, and each other—have teamed up for their first collaboration and Steve's first book *Saturday Night at the Beastro* (HarperCollins). The partnership marks, according to Jane, "a change in the path of my career."

Saturday Night at the Beastro is a far cry from most of Jane's books, but it's a book she's very excited about, especially because of the literary trajectory that took her there. The book, which HarperCollins executive editor Anne Hoppe describes as "Edward Lear meets Edward Gorey," began with a play on words.

According to Steve, "The book began as a title, taking the play on the word 'bistro' and was followed four years later by the introductory triplet [Saturday night as the sun sets/The guests arrive in ties and vest/at the Beastro] and soon by a few stanzas.

"Hesitantly, I offered Jane a look. As she was in bed recuperating from an operation, she was clearly not in full possession of her faculties," Steve joked. "She was weak and vulnerable to suggestion. It must have been the painkillers because she was off and writing!"

But illness didn't slow down Jane on this initial teamwork. She added that the text, illustrations, and typefaces were all collaborative efforts.

"The art took a very long time," she said. "The writing was a joy." Still, the completed book is nothing like its earliest drafts.

"I think what was in the garbage could be another book," Jane said.

As an architect, Steve is well seasoned in building and creating. And *Beastro* presented a similar creative challenge.

"The idea was to produce a three-dimensional-looking printed page by using layers, similar to the way an animation is produced. We knew that this was a fantasy world, but we wanted to marry a creative reality with more standard artwork and for it to work smoothly," he said.

While both contributed to the text, each had special tasks when it came to illustration. Steve did the computer work and photography (images were shot in New York, New Orleans, Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, and Vienna), and Jane worked primarily on drawing and collage.

"With the art, I have a very clear sense of design and type. I don't like type to be an afterthought," Jane said.

"The multimedia collage was an utter flight of joy for Jane," Steve said. "She used imported papers from all over the world, notions, knickknacks and whatever she could find to create some of the strangest yet endearing characters and backgrounds."

"There were some creative disagreements . . . so how did we work together? We both view the writing and illustrating as completely collaborative. The writing was a total joy with only a modicum of creative disagreement," Steve said.

Both the Zalbens give substantial credit to editor Anne Hoppe for her contributions to *Beastro*. "I look at [the book] as a *menage a trois*," Jane said of Hoppe's efforts.

And Hoppe is just as excited about the title. "With its blend of collage, hand-

painting, photography, and digital manipulation, *Saturday Night at the Beastro* doesn't look like anything Jane has done before. Indeed, it doesn't look like anything *anyone* has done before!" she said.

Jane and her husband are planning more collaborations on books. "It feels like a new career," she added.

"There's such a passion involved. It sort of becomes who you are," she said.

Until their next collaboration, there's plenty on both their plates. In the next



Jane and Steve Zalben, as depicted on their book jacket.

year and a half, Jane has three more books coming out; all are collaborative efforts with other artists. And the Zalbens continue to be busy visiting with friends and attending performances by their two grown sons (one's a comedian, one's a composer/violinist).

Beastro may mark a turning point for Jane in that it breaks her out of the stereotype she inherited after writing many Jewish-themed children's books.

"I'm proud of the Beni series because I was told there weren't books like it before that," Jane said. But, considering her career still a "work in progress," Jane will continue putting out books in many genres.

"I look ahead. I'm tremendously excited about it. I feel like I want to experiment more. Maybe I'm beginning again." ☺

What Eudora Welty Read

The Influence of Children's Literature on One Writer's Beginnings



Lois Gilmer

The crowd loved it when the famous woman of letters stood up and flapped her arms like a bird in flight. The children from the Demonstration School at the Mississippi University for Women (formerly known as the Mississippi State College for Women) were receiving their standing ovation on the performance of the musical play *The Shoe Bird*, during which they had flapped their arms. The play was adapted from a children's story written by the author, who had studied for two years at their university. It was one of the presentations at the first Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium held at Mississippi University for Women in 1989.¹

Carol Manning wrote, "The delight she [Welty] had in the imaginative tale and her familiarity with story traditions are evident in *The Shoe Bird*, which makes use of the Henny Penny motif in this genre."² Welty's biographer, Ann Waldron, wrote that *The Shoe Bird* is a comedy, with much wordplay, written in the tradition of E.B. White's children's books, in which creatures talk and act out a fantasy. Waldron went on to say that, like so many successful writers for adults, Welty did not apply the same standards to her work for children as she did to the stories she wrote for adults. Although Welty is well known for her insistence on the importance of place in storytelling, she



All dressed up and ready to go! Welty would ride her bike through the rotunda of the State Capitol to the public library.

did not set her children's story in a definite place, but in some vague Friendly Shoe Store.³

Adult fans of Welty's work approved of *The Shoe Bird*, but critics of children's literature were not as supportive. *The Horn Book* did not review it, and the *Library Journal* review withheld approval based on stereotyped characterizations of birds based on their names (Mockingbird mocks and Pigeon wants to pigeonhole information) and on the moral of the story.⁴

The author, not necessarily the story, inspired the production and enticed many people to come to see it. This and other productions based on Welty's works had been performed with great flourish in her hometown of Jackson, Mississippi, and under the bright lights in New York City. Welty had truly become a legend during her own time.

After that memorable day, little was heard about *The Shoe Bird*, and the author never wrote another children's story. Welty wrote many stories during her career, but she wrote only that one especially for children. Even though she loved children, she preferred to write for an adult audience. This article, therefore, is not about Welty's influence on children's literature; it is about the

influence of children's literature on Eudora Welty.

According to her own words, children's stories had a great influence on Welty's life. She often said in her autobiography *One Writer's Beginnings* and in personal interviews that her love of reading was the basis of her success as a person and as a writer. Many of the titles she read are both named and described in her autobiography. An exhibit focusing on her life and work, held in the Old Capitol Museum of Mississippi History in 2002, included one of the books she owned and read as a child.

Many writers have acknowledged the influence of books and reading on their lives. Others have noted the influence of books and reading on the life of Welty. Carol Manning had this to say about Welty: "[V]irtually every aspect of Welty's art—content and theme, form and technique—has been shaped by a love affair with storytelling that began for her in childhood. . . . Young Eudora Alice's enthusiasm for hearing and reading stories has made Welty herself a storyteller."⁵

Katherine Anne Porter, a good friend of Welty's, wrote the introduction to *A Curtain of Green*, Welty's first book. Porter said, "[A]lways, from the beginning until now, she loved folk tales, fairy tales, old legends, and she likes to listen to the songs and stories of people who live in old communities whose culture is recollected and bequeathed orally."⁶

The winter 1999 issue (volume 23, number 1) of the Georgia State University *Eudora Welty Newsletter* (www.gsu.edu/~wwwewn) contains a list of the works that Welty's parents read and the works she read as a child and as a teenager. Books that she was known to have read as a child, along with annotations, form a two-and-a-half page A-W list, ranging from Aesop and Hans Christian Andersen to *Webster's Dictionary*. In between are the Bible, various encyclopedias, *Victrola*

Book of the Opera, and works by the authors Browning, Bunyan, Carroll, Crane, Finley, Grimm, Hope, Lardner, Lear, Perrault, Stoddard, Swift, Stevenson, Twain, and Verne. Georgia State University's Kirk Nuss wrote that on her sixth or seventh birthday, Welty was presented with a ten-volume set of *Our*



Welty (left) and her neighbor Sonny Withers play with his horse cart.

Wonder World. She was particularly drawn to volume five, *Every Child's Story Book*, which was filled with beautifully illustrated fairy tales, myths, and legends. She kept it until it was tattered and torn, just as her parents had clung to their own favorite books.⁷

By the time she entered high school, Welty had developed an interest in reading magazines, but she continued to read books also. Authors that she was known to have read include Chaucer, Donne, Ford, Mencken, Percy, Perelman, Seeger, Swift, Virgil, Voltaire, and Yeats.⁸ She acknowledged in a 1992 interview with Clyde White that the reading of myths and fairy tales and a poem by William Butler Yeats influenced her writing of *The Golden Apples*, her personal favorite among her many works.⁹ References to myths and fairy tales can also be found in *The Robber Bridegroom* and other works.

During a 1988 interview, Hermione Lee asked the question, "Are there people that

you read between the ages of say, twelve and sixteen, who still matter to you?" Welty replied, "Oh yes, people like Mark Twain . . . Ring Lardner . . . the Brontes. Books I found in the house and in the library."¹⁰

Books were always available to her "in the house and in the library." Her parents, who had both been teachers before they were married, were avid readers themselves and saw the value of instilling the love of reading into her and her two younger brothers. Welty told Patricia Wheatley, "My mother kept right on teaching with her own children. She gave books to the schools here. She wanted to be sure they had a good library to read in. Sometimes she gave my books to it, and I cried and she went back and got some of them back, some that she thought I'd outgrown."¹¹

In her interview with White, she related, "They [parents] spent so much time and effort to get books for me which they were not easily able to afford, but beautiful illustrated books. Read to me all the time and talked to me. So they admired my wishes and stimulated them. That was the best gift you could ever give to a child."¹²

Those words give credence to the words of Butler and Clay in their book *Reading Begins at Home*. They say, "Ideas about reading are more readily caught than taught in the very early years. A youngster who grows up in a family where people read will come to feel that books and papers are worth attention. . . . An enormous amount of scholarly research supports the view that a child's early encounters with print at home have a tremendous effect on his or her development at school."¹³

A good student, Welty began attending Davis School, located across the street from her home, at age five because she was already able to read. Her schoolwork was enhanced by the reading she did at



Among the dolls and other toys, Eudora Welty always found books under the family Christmas tree. This picture was taken on her third Christmas.

the local public library. Her teacher and her parents encouraged her use of the library.

The library was located on the street where the Welty family lived. Welty's mother took her to the library as a young child and secured for her a library card in her own name. She asked the librarian not to forbid her child to read any book in the library—that is, except one. Her mother would not allow her to read *Elsie Dinsmore* for fear the impressionable Welty would be encouraged to mimic Elsie and refuse to play her piano.¹⁴ Welty confided in her autobiography that she read the book anyway.¹⁵

When she got a little older, Welty was allowed to go to the library by herself when she needed something new to read, which was quite often, since she devoured books and was allowed to check out only two at a time. The books were usually placed very carefully in the basket of her bicycle. The state capitol was located on the same street as her home and the library, and, according to Welty, “Through the Capitol was the way to go to the library. You could ride your bike or skate through the Capitol on the way to the library.”¹⁶

Welty's interest in books and libraries continued throughout her lifetime. At

times she publicly voiced her opinion on the importance of reading. For example, on November 17, 1955, the *Jackson Daily News* published an article titled, “Eudora Welty Blames Lack of Reading for Lack of Creative Ability in Child.”¹⁷ A press release from Welty dated April 13, 1961, called for books for Mississippi hospitals and institutions. This press release and a letter from William E. Keith, chairman, Publicity Committee, National Library Week, can be found in the Mississippi State Archives.¹⁸

Since she lived in Jackson almost all of her life, Welty visited the public library there many times. She also visited other libraries in places where she studied, or vacationed, or lectured, and she befriended libraries as opportunities arose. In 1981 she gave the commencement address at the University of West Florida in Pensacola where she was presented with an honorary Doctor of Literature degree, one of the many honorary degrees that have been bestowed upon her. She graciously accepted the degree and the accommodations provided for her travel, but she declined the honorarium, asking instead that the money be given to the library for new books. Delighted library staff members promptly purchased titles by and about the author that were not already in the collection.

When a branch of the Jackson Public Library moved to new quarters in the remodeled Sears Roebuck building on North State Street in early 1986, the Jackson City Council voted unanimously to name it the Eudora Welty Library. The library opened with yet another hometown celebration of Welty, this one called, “A Toast to Eudora.” The Friends of the Library invited everyone in town to come, eat, listen to the Chimneyville Jazz Band, and view the new facility.¹⁹

Welty was proud to have a library named for her, and she visited the library often. Prior to her death in July 2001, fans traveling through Jackson would stop at the library hoping to see her. Some were irritated when she was not there because they expected her to always be present in the library that she “owned.”

To stress the importance of reading, Belhaven College, located in Jackson, across the street from the house Welty called home during her adult years, presented “A Spring Tribute to Eudora Welty” on April 19, 2001, about three months before her death. The event was part of “All Mississippi Reading the Same Book,” during which Mississippi's Center for the Book, in honoring Welty, enabled scholars to crisscross the state reading from her works in Eudora Welty Reading Circles. The Eudora Welty Library in Jackson served as the first host.

“What would you advise parents who aren't themselves passionate [about reading], but still want to nurture their children's creativity?” interviewer Danyne Romaine Powell asked Welty in 1988. She replied, “Even if you didn't have that, and you instigated a love of reading in the children, then it could follow. What worries me so much about now is that people grow up without having read anything. *Anything!* And the sense of the language is getting so muddled and imprecise. The poetry of the language is being lost. I can tell that also from letters I get. I think that's the most important thing in the world of education. The written word.”²⁰

Recent educational research indicates that there are those who agree with Welty on the subject of parental nurturing of children's creativity through reading. Various guides and booklets have been

written to assist parents in this endeavor. Mark Thogmartin's guide recommends using children's literature to promote both learning and enjoyment. He suggests books to read and tells parents where to find them.²¹ Ann Epstein's booklet explains the ways children read in the early years and tells parents what they can do to support their child's learning.²² In her booklet *Read for Joy!*, Claudia Quigg emphasizes the importance of reading to and with children. She also discusses the importance of the library for children of all ages.²³ Florida's Born to Read project is devoted to nurturing a baby's love of learning from its earliest days.²⁴

The value of making books available to children through the home, schools, and libraries cannot be overemphasized. Boardman encourages parents to evaluate libraries in the schools their children attend,²⁵ and Fredericks' guide helps librarians involve parents in the selection of children's literature.²⁶ Diane Canavan and LaVonne H. Sanborn advise an interested parent or teacher who lacks extensive knowledge of children's literature, "The best way to locate appropriate books to supplement the curriculum is to ask a helpful and cooperative librarian."²⁷

All children introduced to children's literature at an early age will not grow up to become famous writers, of course, but the inspiring story of Welty emphasizes the importance of exposure of children to good books by parents, teachers, and librarians. ☺

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Call for Referees

To make *Children and Libraries* a truly interactive publication, we're looking for ALSC members to serve as volunteer referees for journal articles. Unsolicited articles and those of a scholarly nature must be submitted to at least two referees to judge the submissions on accuracy, style, impact, importance, and interest. Specialists in particular genres (such as technology, literature, intellectual freedom, programming, etc.) are especially needed.

Referees make recommendations to the editor on whether or not manuscripts should be accepted for publication. Interested librarians should contact *Children and Libraries* Editor Sharon Korbeck at toylady@athenet.net for more information on the referee process.



Then Little Black Sambo said, "If you want them, say so, or I'll take them away."
But the Tigers would not let go of each other's tails, and so they could only say "Gr-r-r-rrrrrrr!"
So Little Black Sambo put on all his fine clothes again and walked off.

And the Tigers were very, very angry, and they ran round the tree, trying to get at each other, but they ran faster and faster, till they were so fast that you couldn't see their legs!

Casey, Sambo, and a Hooded Lass

The Artistry of Christopher Bing

Megan Lynn Isaac

Summer/Fall 2004 • Children and Libraries

Some children's book illustrators play it safe and rely on tried and true tales to buttress their art. Other illustrators like to explore and experiment with a text in the hope of opening their readers' eyes in new ways.

Christopher Bing does both at the same time. A relative newcomer to the field of children's book illustrations, his three books have intrigued, entertained, and sometimes even astonished both the adults and children lucky enough to discover them. Trained at the Rhode Island School of Design, Bing spent the first part of his career as a professional illustrator of editorial and political cartoons, and his three books all showcase his love of the engraver's art, a method of illustrating common in early newspapers. The incredible detail he brings to the design of his books—whether playfully decorating his endpapers with fold-out documents, scoring his glittering cover art with the marks left behind by a tiger's claws, or choosing only historically authentic typefaces for his text—can hardly fail to entice a reader to look closely and then to look closely again.

Bing hit a home run with his first book, an illustrated version of Ernest L. Thayer's classic nineteenth-century poem "Casey at the Bat" (Handprint Books, 2000), which was named a Caldecott Honor book in 2001. Ironically, the poem tells the tale of an overly confident batter who strikes out in the final inning of the big game. The book is designed as a scrapbook of newspaper engravings, sports columns, editorials, advertisements, and period memorabilia. Younger readers can enjoy the poem and the engraved illustrations, while older readers, especially baseball fans, can scour each page and learn about everything from the nineteenth-century controversy over segregating players into white and black leagues. As the editor's note explains on the book's endpapers, some pages in this exhilarating volume include as many as twenty layers of design elements.

(left) Spread from *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. Note Bing's interesting technique to make the book look timeworn.

All illustrations by Christopher Bing, reprinted with the permission of Handprint Books.

Bing's second book, an illustrated version of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" (Handprint Books, 2001) uses a similar style of engraved illustrations accompanied by both faux and recreated documents to bring to life the historical circumstances and local geography that led to the famous conflict between the British Regulars and the local militias. Pairing the fictitious and the historical versions of the story of Paul Revere in one volume, Bing adds new dimension to an already familiar tale.

In his latest book, Bing embraces both risk and opportunity to reillustrate Helen Bannerman's often discussed tale *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (Handprint Books, 2003). Originally written in 1889, the story of a young boy who is threatened by tigers but ultimately outwits them, has entertained generations of children. Yet, the various racist illustrations that have accompanied the text have undermined its value. In the last decade, several writers and illustrators have attempted to give the story new life and a new look, and Bing joins this trend. Bing's version, however, is noteworthy not only for its fascinating engravings but also for the compelling documents, postcards, and artifacts he has used to frame the tale and present it within a thoughtful historic context.

CAL: Mr. Bing, I've noticed that the acknowledgments in each of your three books include a thank-you to your wife and three children for continuing to "feed the bear in the barn." I expect the barn in question must be your studio. Could you tell me a little bit about the bear and the studio?

CB: The studio is in the second story of an old small barn that could almost be a garage. When we moved in, I didn't have much of a chance to work up a studio the way I wanted it, so I've had birds, squirrels, raccoons, even a skunk wander through. I just sat and watched the skunk and thought, "OK, just don't

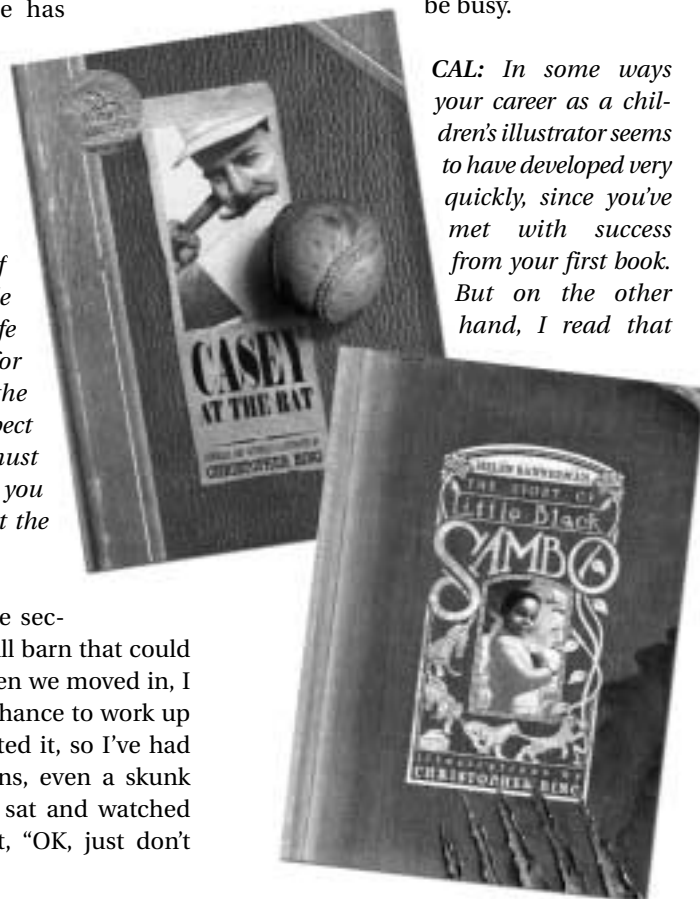


Christopher Bing

make any editorial comments." He left a little later.

Since I work at home, the kids feel free to come out to the barn whenever they need something, and sometimes I will be a bit focused and grouchy. But they still keep coming out! I don't ever lock the door. I want them to know they can find me if they need me, but I can be busy.

CAL: In some ways your career as a children's illustrator seems to have developed very quickly, since you've met with success from your first book. But on the other hand, I read that



you've been working on the illustrations for The Story of Little Black Sambo for nearly twenty years, or, in some ways, maybe even longer than that, since your publisher, Christopher Franceschelli, explains in the note he wrote to accompany the book that you first met Bannerman's story as a small boy when your grandfather read it to you. How did you come to create your version of this tale?

CB: *The Story of Little Black Sambo* was originally something I just did for myself. I did the original illustrations in black and white. I consider myself a political and editorial illustrator. A friend who had always worked in a square said he had to change his format to a rectangle and was having a terrible time doing it. It was throwing his design sense off. I don't know if it frightened me, but I didn't want my mind's eye to calcify in an 8" x 11" space with my political and editorial work, so I asked myself what I would do just for myself, if no one would ever see it. So, I started working up some big images for *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. I had done some sketches in school, but I hadn't expected to carry through with it.

I knew the book was all about color, but at that time I was doing black and white. I mentioned it casually in conversation, and friends were interested. There was a big drive and push from friends of all races about going out and getting this published. I was very skeptical until I got this kind of encouragement from African American friends. So, it sounds very politically correct and all that, but for me it was really just a labor of love, and like Helen Bannerman, I hadn't considered getting it published.

CAL: *One of the things most striking about The Story of Little Black Sambo is the glorious color and golden images that you've created. This seems like a real shift from*

Casey at the Bat, which is done almost exclusively in sepia tones, and The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, which takes place mostly at night and is illustrated with a much darker palette.



Spreads from *Casey at the Bat* by Ernest L. Thayer, illustrated by Christopher Bing

CB: I'm discovering so much more about color. When I started out my career, I was really just doing black and white in newspaper work. When working on a single editorial piece, I don't have to worry about keeping color balance, the way I have to with *Little Black Sambo* as it all happens on one day. But here I had to change the shadows and the length of the shadows as the day goes on. Even with *Casey*, maintaining the fiction that it had all come from the same newspaper that had aged over time was a challenge, too.

I'm sure there are artists out there who would say, "You've picked the wrong blue

for that shadow," but I've actually enjoyed working with color, though it is the thing I really have to work at. The reason that the book is a year late [being published] is that the original coloring I had was too

mature and wasn't helping add to the fantastic nature of the environment, and for myself, I had to go back in and redo the whole thing again. I was very happy that my publisher stayed with me for that!

CAL: *Again, I know from the acknowledgments in your books that Chris Van Allsburg has influenced you as an artist. He also works with black and white or dark palettes in many of his books. Has he influenced how you use color?*

CB: When I was at the Rhode Island School of Design, he was a professor of mine. One of his most influential books in my life was *Ben's Dream*. I'm grateful to Christopher for his pen and ink work more than for color. When I was working on *Paul Revere*, I went through old images from people like Maxfield Parrish [and others] for ideas. I had to explore whether the light coming out from the windows [in the colonial era houses] wasn't too bright. I would literally light a few candles in the house and go out to see what was radiating out. Unlike other books [about Paul Revere's ride] with nearly klieg light brightness coming out of the Old North Church tower, you have to look carefully in my illustration to see the two little points of light because Revere was almost a half-mile away.

CAL: *A lot of the illumination in Paul Revere comes from a full moon that you've included in many of the illustrations. Was the moon really full that night or is that simply artistic license?*

CB: The moon was really full. All the illustrations are historically accurate, with the proviso that Longfellow had written Revere into a hole with the idea that he looked back over his shoulder. In fact, Revere really knew the signal already, and Revere never made it to Concord. So, I drew the image of his back, so you can't see who is making the final ride to Concord.

CAL: Careful readers will notice that while you have signed the engravings in the lower left hand corner of each page in *Little Black Sambo*, there is a different name signed in each of the lower right hand corners. Who are these people?

CB: All the signatures are grandparents—either my grandparents, my wife's grandparents, or my children's grandparents. When *Little Red Riding Hood* comes out, I'm using Tessa, my daughter, as my model, and I'm using her friends' names as the signatures. The reason the extra names were in Casey was to keep up the fiction of engravers. In Revere's time, artists usually did their own engraving, so I used only my own name there. But when I started on *Sambo*, I decided there was no reason not to. I get a kick out of it.

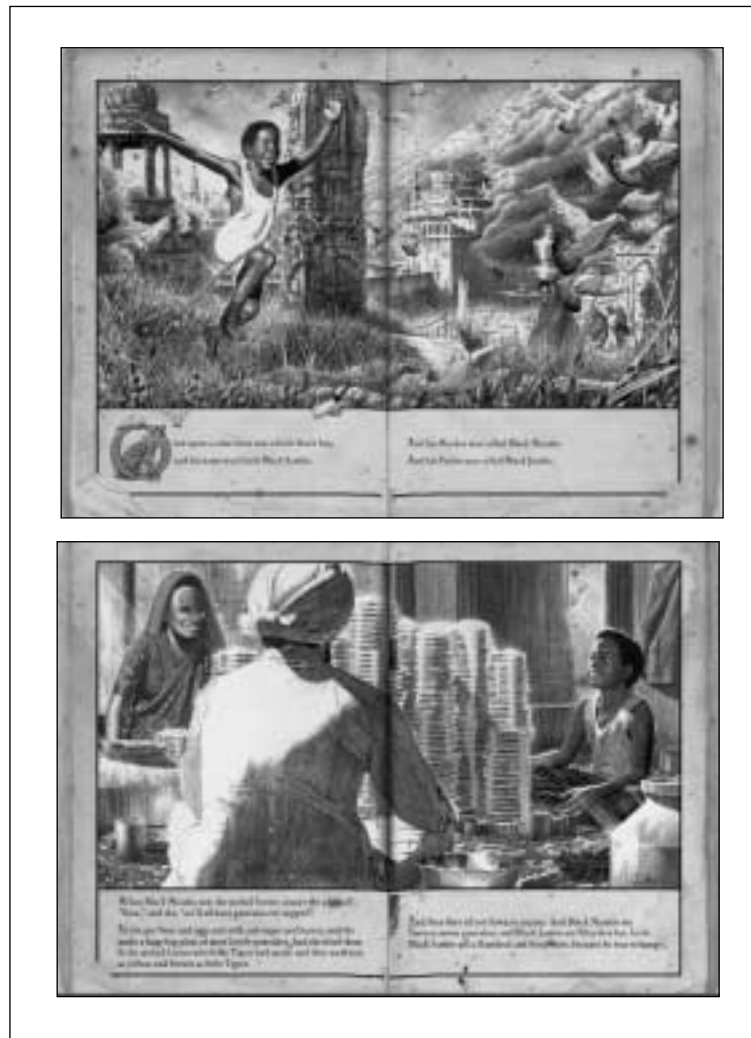
CAL: Well, you just alluded to *Little Red Riding Hood* as your next project. Tell me more about what you are working on now.

CB: I'm working on two books, one on the Bill of Rights and *Little Red Riding Hood*. I don't know which will be published first yet. For *Little Red Riding Hood*, I will be using both the Perrault and Grimm texts and putting them into a historical context. It is an even more controversial tale than *Sambo* since it was a coming of age story for girls of about fourteen.

When she comes to the grandmother's house she is disrobing as she climbs into

the bed with the wolf, but at the last minute she says, "No, I have to relieve myself," and escapes by her own wits. I'm running with the Perrault and Grimm texts [which have been softened], but

and not just a different way of writing. I love making that point to kids and suddenly seeing a little light go on in their eyes. I liked being able to present the real story and the artistic one in a single source.



Spreads from *The Story of Little Black Sambo* by Helen Bannerman, illustrated by Christopher Bing

there are deep and strong histories behind them.

CAL: Two of your books are illustrated poems. Do you have a special fondness for poetry?

CB: Yes and no. My original experience of "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" had put me off poetry. I didn't understand why an adult would write a poem about something that really happened yet make it so wildly inaccurate. It is the sort of thing a child picks at, but makes more sense for an adult. Part of what I'm trying to bridge with kids is letting them know that poetry is art

I have, literally, since the time I started in college, gathered more than fifty children's stories in my head that I've been working on and refining, and the list keeps growing. I'm happy that I've been working with the public domain work first because it has given me an education about structuring images.

People don't realize how incredibly complex and how much work and attention and detail goes into creating a children's book. It is like a magician in that if you make people think, "Oh, I can do that!" it is a success. You make it look deceptively easy.

CAL: Is there anything else you'd like readers to know about you or your work?

CB: I will never put out a book that I wouldn't buy myself. If someone buys one of my books, I want them to feel like they got the better part of the deal. People are plunking down hard-earned money,

and it is important that I feel they've gotten the best product I can produce. That is part of the reason that I went back and spent another year on *Sambo*.

I am very committed to making sure that if someone buys one of my books, that it is something that they want to take down off the shelf time and time again. I don't want my books to be just a one-shot thing. ☺

Megan Lynn Isaac traded her job as an associate professor for the opportunity to stay at home with her sons and work as a freelance writer.

Book Reviews

Bromann, Jennifer. *Storytime Action! 2,000+ Ideas for Making 500 Picture Books Interactive*.
Irving, Jan. *Stories Never Ending: A Program Guide for Schools and Libraries*.
Maddigan, Beth and Drennan, Stefanie. *The Big Book of Stories, Songs, and Sing-Alongs: Programs for Babies, Toddlers, and Families*.

Books, Programming, and Readers

Junko Yokota, Book Review Editor, and Jude Mathews

Bromann, Jennifer. *Storytime Action! 2,000+ Ideas for Making 500 Picture Books Interactive*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2003. (ISBN 1-55570-459-X).

Jennifer Bromann is a seasoned story-time programmer and lets readers in on her techniques—techniques she promises will both cut preparation time and engage young audiences. Bromann explains that making book experiences interactive by asking pertinent questions of child audiences helps children pay close attention to stories and encourages critical thinking. To create activities that work best, Bromann urges that, rather than searching our professional collections for added bells and whistles to use in between stories, librarians and classroom teachers look for activities “within the context of the stories you read . . . stop piecing together elaborate plans from the suggested activities of various story-time manuals. The stories themselves will bring fun activities to mind.”

The author presents basic methods for creating activities from stories. She describes her “top ten interactive elements” and provides a handy checklist for storytellers and readers. Following this is Bromann’s annotated bibliography, which is the bulk of the book. Listed are five hundred picture books, both time-honored and new; the list serves as a compendium of book-related activities. Inexperienced story timers should be able to extrapolate from her examples, and “old timers” will find inspiration from the simple, clearly described book tie-ins.

Indexes to titles and themes are appended.

Irving, Jan. *Stories Never Ending: A Program Guide for Schools and Libraries*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. (ISBN 1-56308-997-1).

Jan Irving pulls together a thematically grouped set of books and offers ideas for programs appropriate for public or school libraries, as well as elementary school classrooms. The first chapter highlights books about books, reading, and storytelling. It is followed with reading promotion ideas and a few programming ideas in detail. Photocopy-ready line art is included so masks and puppets can be created for dramatic play.

The rest of the book is divided into chapters that focus on art and artists, math, food, storytelling, poetry, humor, and the United States.

The overall set of groupings is quite varied; however, it may reflect how the adults who work with children and books find it useful to organize the books. The booklists are helpful and pull together some good combinations appropriate for programming. The ideas are practical and easy to implement. Fun activities range from singing to role playing. While many will be pleased to see the line drawings that are intended for photocopying, it would be good to offer children a chance to draw their own masks and puppets and create them out of various artistic media to explore and enjoy.

Maddigan, Beth and Drennan, Stefanie. *The Big Book of Stories, Songs, and Sing-Alongs: Programs for Babies,*

Toddlers, and Families. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2003. (ISBN 1-56308-975-0).

This book is an easy-to-use source of literature-based library programs for preschoolers ages six months through three years and mixed-age groups of families. Its aim is to save librarians the work of gathering “all the pertinent information . . . to start a children’s program for preschoolers. . . .”

Following introductory notes on such down-to-earth subjects as registration fundamentals and basic materials to have on hand for many story programs, the authors present their programs by age group (six to eleven months; twelve to twenty-three months; twos; threes; and families). Each section begins with important child development and essential programming guidelines, which less experienced librarians will find quite helpful.

Each age grouping contains eight complete theme-related programs, such as “Baby and Me: Barnyard Banter,” “Just Threes: Spring Fling,” and “Family Fun: Enchanted Evening.” Within the program matter itself, the rhymes and lyrics come with symbols to indicate the types of actions called for (song, clapping, bouncing, actions, fingerplays). While more abundant than elegant, handy reproducible images for craft activities and souvenirs are included throughout. Each section ends with a bibliography of age-appropriate children’s books that closely relate to the programs. Appended are a bibliography of professional reading and indexes to the stories and rhymes found in the book. ☺

ALSC News

Board Major Actions

Electronic Actions

The following actions were voted on by the board via the ALSCBOARD electronic discussion list. The month/year of the vote is in parentheses after each action.

To become a “read only” subscriber to ALSCBOARD and stay on top of the news, visit www.ala.org/alsc and click on the “Stay Connected” graphic near the bottom of the page.

VOTED, to co-sponsor in name only a program to be presented at the 2005 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago by PLA’s Basic Education and Literacy Resources and Services Committee. (May 2004)

VOTED, to revise the charge of the Geisel Award committee to read: “To select author(s) and illustrator(s) of a beginning reader book who demonstrate great creativity and imagination in his/her/their literary and artistic achievements to engage children in reading. (April 2004)

VOTED, to approve the Equity of Access statement prepared by board members Judy O’Malley and Molly Kinney. (April 2004)

VOTED, not to require the Baldwin Curator to serve ex officio on the Bechtel Committee. (April 2004)

VOTED, to maintain the Bechtel criterion that applicants must be ALSC members. (April 2004)

VOTED, to approve the *Children and*

Libraries Policies and Procedures document. (April 2004)

VOTED, to invite REFORMA to appoint a Spanish-speaking member to serve a two-year term on ALSC’s Great Web Sites for Kids (GWS) Committee for the purposes of evaluating the existing Web sites on “Lugares en español para niños” on the GWS site and evaluating new Spanish-language Web sites for inclusion on this Spanish-language page of GWS. This term will begin immediately upon appointment and will end December 31, 2005. (March 2004)

VOTED, to add the term “in English” and

the definition (“in English” means that the committee considers only books published in English. This requirement DOES NOT limit the use of words or phrases in another language where appropriate in context.”) to the Caldecott, Newbery, Sibert, and Wilder manuals. (March 2004)

Annual Conference 2004 Actions

VOTED, to approve the 2004 Midwinter Meeting minutes.

VOTED, that the Oral History Committee expand its membership from four members plus the chair, to six members plus the chair.



Young patrons at Oak Park (Illinois) Public Library enjoy the NASA @ your library exhibit, which was featured at the library from April 5 through May 17, 2004. Visit the ALSC Web site at www.ala.org/alsc for the complete exhibit tour schedule and to link to the interactive ALSC/NASA @ your library Web site for children.

VOTED, that, to accurately reflect the ALSC Scholarships Committee's function, one sentence in the function statement be changed. The newly proposed function statement reads as follows (bolded text indicates the change):

"To select recipients and alternates for the annual ALSC scholarships: Frederic G. Melcher and Bound to Stay Bound for professional education of librarians to work with children; to **assist the ALSC office in publicizing** the scholarships to potential candidates; and to advise the ALSC Board on needed changes in terms or administration of the scholarships."

VOTED, that the term for the ALSC Distinguished Service Award Committee be changed to run from Midwinter to Midwinter, instead of from Annual to Annual, to ensure ample response time for potential applicants and more opportunities for the committee to review and discuss the applications.

VOTED, that ALSC will offer authors a 50/50 split of the 10 percent of receipts from ALA Editions.

VOTED, to accept the Guidelines for ALSC Partnerships.

VOTED, that if an author or representative of an author of book published by a small, independent press submits his or her Newbery-(Caldecott-/Sibert-) eligible book to the Newbery (Caldecott/Sibert) Committee for consideration, and that book is republished later by another publisher, then the book will not be reconsidered upon its commercial publication. The chair of the Newbery (Caldecott/Sibert) Committee will keep and pass on a current -year list of Newbery- (Caldecott-/Sibert-) eligible books received directly from authors or from small, independent presses.

VOTED, that ALSC will transfer \$5,000 to the Belpré Endowment in the 2005-2006 budget year.

VOTED, that ALSC match the \$50,000 (or any amount up to \$50,000) that PLA has proposed to fund the Every Child Ready to Read initiative.

VOTED, that ALSC provide complimentary registration and \$250 to ALSC mem-

bers who speak at its National Institute.

VOTED, to establish a joint ALSC/REFORMA discussion group on Día de los libros/Día de los Niños.

VOTED, to approve the draft Virtual Participation Task Force Timeline.

VOTED, to approve the Guidelines for New ALSC Awards.

VOTED, to accept the 2005 program proposals. The ALSC/REFORMA co-sponsored program will be added.

Membership Bundling Studied

An ad hoc committee appointed by the joint executive committees of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), recently undertook an informal study of costs associated with offering a joint membership package. This research was done both as a result of member interest in joining multiple youth divisions for a reduced membership fee and as an exploration of using this type of bundling as a membership recruitment tool.

Upon completing their data collection, the group determined that the cost of providing basic services to a member exceeds current membership dues in each of the divisions. Based on that research, the committee determined that such a multiple membership package should not be offered at this time. They also recommended that the decision be revisited in three years. C. Allen Nichols, YALSA Fiscal Officer, served as chair of the ad hoc group. Carrie Gardner, AASL Treasurer, and Floyd Dickman, ALSC Budget & Finance Committee Chair, represented their respective divisions.

ALSC Seeks Award Applicants

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

- **ALSC/BWI Grant.** The \$3,000 ALSC/Book Wholesalers Grant is designed to

encourage outstanding summer reading program development 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.

- **ALSC/Sagebrush Education Resources Literature Program Grant.** This award, made possible through an annual grant from Sagebrush Education Resources, provides a grant of \$1,000 to support an ALSC member's attendance at the 2005 Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois. The award is given to a children's librarian who has developed and implemented a unique reading or literature program for children (infants through age fourteen) that brings children and books together to develop lifelong reading habits.
- **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.
- **Distinguished Service Award.** ALSC members are invited to nominate one of their fellow members to be the recipient of the ALSC 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. The recipient receives \$1,000 and an engraved pin at the ALSC Membership Meeting at the ALA Annual Conference.

- **Penguin Putnam Young Readers Group Award.** This award consists of

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2006

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ALSC News

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four \$600 awards presented to children's librarians to enable them to attend the ALA Annual Conference for the first time. The 2005 Annual Conference will be held in Chicago, Illinois. The recipients must be ALSC members, work directly with children, and have one to ten years of library experience.

For more information about each award and to download award applications, visit the ALSC Web site at www.ala.org/alsc and click on Awards & Scholarships, Professional Awards. To request a form by mail, send a postcard to ALSC, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; or e-mail: alsc@ala.org. Deadline for all professional award applications is December 1, 2004.

Your Suggestions Welcome

ALSC members are welcome to suggest titles for the 2005 media awards and for the 2006 Belpré Award.

- **The Newbery Medal** is given to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. Please send recommendations with full bibliographic information to Susan Faust at ncchair05@aol.com.
- **The Caldecott Medal** is given to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book for children. Please send recommendations with full bibliographic information to Betsy Hearne at ehearne@uiuc.edu.
- **The Sibert Medal**, sponsored by Bound to Stay Bound Books, and named in honor of the company's long-time president Robert F. Sibert, is given to the author of the most distinguished informational book for children. Please send recommendations with full bibliographic information to Kathleen Isaacs at sibert05@mindspring.com.
- **The Pura Belpré Award**, co-sponsored by ALSC and REFORMA, is presented to a Latino/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. Please send suggestions for the 2006 award, with full bibliographic information, to Barbara Scotto at barbara_scotto@brookline.mec.edu.
- **The Andrew Carnegie Medal**, supported by an endowment from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, honors an outstanding video production for children. Please send suggestions with full bibliographic information to Elizabeth Simmons at esimmons@co.new-castle.de.us.
- **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. Please send suggestions with full bibliographic information to Marilyn P. Hollinshead at mhollinshead@surfglobal.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, made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children. Please send suggestions for the 2005 award to Janice Del Negro at delnegro@alexia.lis.uiuc.edu.

Great Web Sites Now Even Better

The Great Web Sites for Kids Web site now features a search engine that allows users to search its many pages and recommended Web links by key words or age level. The search engine will help children, parents, teachers, and librarians access the Web resources that interest them much more quickly and easily. Great Web Sites for Kids, a reference tool for locating librarian-recommended Web sites on numerous subjects for children and caregivers, is at www.ala.org/greatsites.

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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 the vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, which 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 four copies of the manuscript to the CAL editor at the address below. (One copy if sending by e-mail.) 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 or copy the text directly into the body of an e-mail message, or send on a 3½" disk or on CD. Illustrative material (such as high-resolution digital images) MUST be sent via disk or CD. Disks and 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 name 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.

If sending a disk, label it with the first author's name and all file names.

Writing and Bibliographic Style

Children and Libraries follows the 14th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Authors are responsible for accuracy in the manuscript, including all names and citations. Editor may revise accepted manuscripts for clarity, accuracy, and readability, consistent with publication style and journal audience.

Address

Send correspondence and manuscripts to Sharon Korbeck, CAL editor, via e-mail to toylady@athenet.net.



THE LAST WORD

NEVER TOO OLD TO SUMMON AN OWL: Sharing the Pleasures of Potter

Cheryl L. Wires

Children—and adults, for that matter—may not know their way to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters on their own. Sometimes you have to guide them, whether they live in Great Britain or Cuyahoga County, Ohio. One of our programs in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, is turning both Muggle and wizard heads alike.

Our staff has filled a display case with treasures even the most ardent Hogwarts fans haven't seen. One young boy, nose pressed against the glass, beckoned his little brother with an excited shout of "Come here!" Children are simply drawn to Harry Potter. Adults, likewise, are intrigued by the series' success.

Our project is a novelty—a presentation of the Potter phenomenon to adult community groups. After all, you're never too old to summon an owl or board the Hogwarts Express?

Perfectly accessorized with a Harry Potter watch and an ALA Banned Books Week pin, I begin the program with these juicy "Potterisms." The bespectacled Potter has made J. K. Rowling a billionaire; conversely, fellow Brit Emily Brontë earned no royalties at all. The Cleveland Art Museum created special tours to show how the mythological creatures evoked in Rowling's series are depicted in its collection. Tours usually draw twenty people; two hundred came for the Potter display.

My presentation continues with explanations for the series' popularity. Is it marketing strategy? Media hype? Similar to classic reads? Is Rowling a British Mark Twain? A contemporary Charles Dickens? Like Twain and Dickens, Rowling writes with a socioeconomic conscience. While this is increasingly apparent as the series develops, issues of equality and diversity lie at the core of her very first book.

Ron Weasley, Harry's best friend, is poor. Hermione Granger, Harry's other best friend, is Muggle-born. Interestingly, issues of ignorance and want are personified as a boy and girl in *A Christmas Carol*.

This program is a success story. Nearly five hundred people in seventeen local groups have attended. While these quantitative measures are significant, the qualitative expressions are the true joy.

Days, weeks, and months afterward, attendees still think and talk about the speech. Items from audience members magically appear in my mailbox, as if delivered by owl post. (Hedwig? Could that be you?)

A physics professor and consultant mailed an article about the scientific dimensions of Rowling's fictional universe. The North Olmsted (Ohio) Branch staff and the Southeast Branch Friends (Ohio) also sent a poem written by an eighty-seven-year-old for his granddaughter, a thought-provoking transcript from Christian radio, a Harry Potter treasure box, and a thank-you note signed by the secretary "and all the Muggles" in her organization.

This is, finally, a song of praise for the kind, gentle, and kindred spirits who have guided this work, especially Janice Smuda, former early-childhood specialist and Project LEAP (the Library's Educational Alternative for Preschoolers) Librarian at Cuyahoga County Public Library.

When Smuda shared her enthusiasm for the Harry Potter series, I knew I found the material with which I could easily intrigue and engage an audience's interest. The epitome of elegance and grace, the source of reflections and revelations, Smuda inspired the choice of Rowling's work for this project and, in an epiphany moment, identified the podium as her place. That is why, in telling this story, my first thought—and last word—are devoted to the late Janice Smuda and her inestimable blessings.

Cheryl L. Wires is a public service assistant at the Cuyahoga County Public Library in Ohio and a presenter at Baldwin-Wallace College's Institute for Learning in Retirement. This fall she resumes her quest for Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, that great portal to magical places and lecterns.

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 us your Last Word to Sharon Korbeck at toylady@athenet.net.