

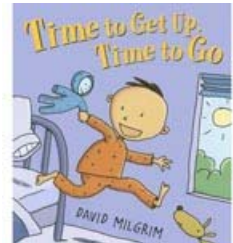
BOOK NOTES

Center for Children's & Young Adult Books

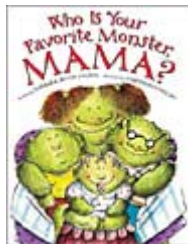
Minnesota State University, Mankato

July 2006

When summer arrives, most people strive for a slower-paced schedule. Toddlers, however, seem to have the same boundless amount of energy, no matter what the season. David Milgrim carries viewers through one energetic day with a young boy and his doll in Time to Get Up, Time to Go (Houghton Mifflin). Rising before his sleepy parents, the youngster provides breakfast for his companion before they head outside for a stroll and a trip to the playground. The varied activities showcase the power of the imagination, with a washtub providing a place for a doll's swim lesson, and an old cardboard box serving as a stove on which to prepare a pretend meal. The simple rhymed text offers a sentence or two per page, just enough for beginning listeners. They will appreciate the uncluttered cartoon illustrations that focus on boy or doll while providing reassuring hints of adult (and watchdog) oversight at the pictures' edges or backgrounds.



Harry, a young monster, needs plenty of reassurance about his place in the family in Who Is Your Favorite Monster, Mama? by Barbara Shook Hazen (Hyperion). Harry is the middle child



in his family of monsters. Baby sister, Bronwen, needs plenty of care while older brother, Bruxley, gets to participate in more exciting and interesting activities such as cooking. Harry tries to make do with his three pets—a mole, a slug, and a bat named Tiny, Slimy, and Whiny. However, they can't make up for the attention from Mama, which he tries to gain by naughtiness until she manages to convince him that she loves all her children, just as he loves all his pets. Maryann Kovalski's charming illustrations of three green, furry monsters add to the fun for all children, especially those in the middle of a group of siblings.

Stephanie Baurer's paintings provide lots of visual fun as well as a challenge in Counting Cockatoos by Stella Blackstone (Barefoot Books). What could be a straightforward cumulative counting book with an increasing number of animals incorporates the twist of locating two

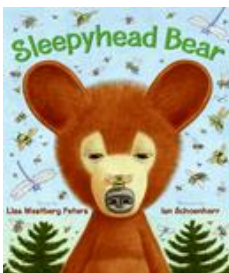


cockatoos in each double-page spread. The whimsical illustrations each feature a colorful border plus easily counted creatures such as “six slinking snakes” or “eleven elegant lizards.” The cockatoos are more elusive because they change color and sometimes even try to disguise themselves as the other animals in the group. The book provides additional counting practice after the main story as well for those eager to continue exploring numbers.

Doris K. Gayzagian provides a more deliberate and calm counting experience in One White Wishing Stone (National Geographic). Set on a beach, the story takes us through the activities of a summer day that a mother and young girl spend together. As the child explores her surroundings, she gathers items like seaweed strands and bits of driftwood that she uses to decorate an elaborate sand castle. Kristina Swarner’s watercolor and pencil prints have a calm and dreamlike quality that suffuses the presentation with summer sunshine. At the end, beach treasures lie on a moonlit windowsill as the little girl settles down to sleep.

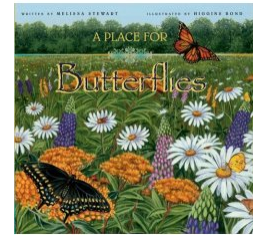


Lisa Westberg Peters documents the trials of trying to get some rest on a noisy summer day in Sleepyhead Bear (HarperCollins). Trying to escape the heat, he heads into his cave, only to encounter buzzing insects. He can’t find a refuge from the annoying bugs in the lake, up a tree, or in a log. In fact, he grows more and more agitated until he lands in a meadow with insects of a different sort. Amid fragrant flowers, he encounters dozens of bright butterflies that tickle away his hurts. In the evening he finally dozes off as lightning bugs fill the sky. Ian Schoenherr’s comic portrayal of Bear’s tribulations add to the fun in this latest book from the St. Paul, Minnesota author.

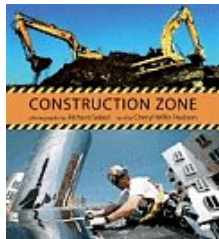


Those who want to learn more about the insect friends Sleepyhead Bear encounters can consult Melissa Stewart’s A Place for Butterflies (Peachtree). This introduction to a dozen butterflies points out what steps need to be taken in order for them to survive. Among the greatest threats is the loss of various habitats, such as wetlands and wooded areas. Even the eradication of particular plants can have dire consequences. For example, monarch butterfly caterpillars eat

only milkweed leaves, but those plants make cattle and sheep sick. Farmers need encouragement to let milkweed grow where animals don't graze. Higgins Bond's acrylic renderings of the different butterflies in their habitat helps viewers appreciate the insects and their surroundings. Maps inside the front and back covers clearly show the range of each butterfly included in the book. Stewart suggests ways to help butterflies, including the creation of a neighborhood butterfly garden.



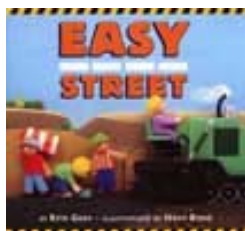
Although summer provides opportunities to observe animals and plants, it also offers many chances to watch people. Among the more fascinating sights for many children are the activities



in a Construction Zone (Candlewick). For three years photographer Richard Sobol visited the construction site of the Stata Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to document the building's progress. Cheryl Willis Hudson's text that accompanies the photos selected for this book introduces readers to various people involved in the massive project and the equipment they use to complete such a huge and complex project. Sidewalk

superintendents of any age will enjoy the intriguing views of how a building develops from architect to finished structure.

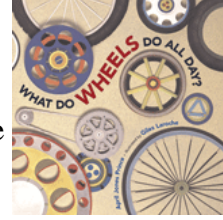
Rita Gray concentrates on a different type of construction in Easy Street (Penguin). Her simple, rhymed text follows the progress of a road as workers excavate an area and then apply various layers to produce pavement on which vehicles can drive. The process in this book uses asphalt,



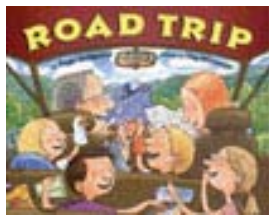
and Gray provides detailed information about that substance and how it is used in an afterword addressed to much older readers than the target audience for the picture book portion. Mary Bono's 3-D illustrations feature people that resemble Fisher-Price figures working with real stones and gravel for textured portrayals of road crews at work.

As soon as a road is finished, there are plenty of wheels to roll along the surface. Vehicles are among the objects April Jones Prince includes in answering the question, What Do Wheels Do All Day? (Houghton Mifflin) Her rhymed text includes a bicycle race and a traffic jam, but her

exploration of wheels ranges much wider. Scooter, stroller, wheelchair, windmill, Ferris wheel, roller blades, unicycle, merry-go-round. We encounter wheels everywhere. Giles Laroche's illustrations feature intricate cut-paper figures that remind viewers of the many places they encounter wheels in their everyday lives, whether at work or play.



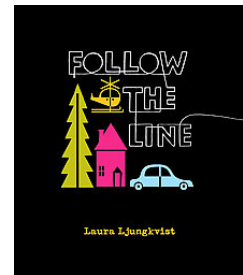
Roger Eschbacher lets us join a family spending lots of time in their vehicle in Road Trip (Penguin). Mother, father, and four children spend two long days in the car on the way to a family reunion at Grandma's house "across the nation." Short poems document such familiar



situations as backseat squabbles, games of I Spy and license plate bingo, insect-splattered windshields, and bathroom breaks. Brief stops at roadside attractions such as Bunyan's Hive with "giant bees and wax abounding" provide opportunities to purchase postcards and souvenirs.

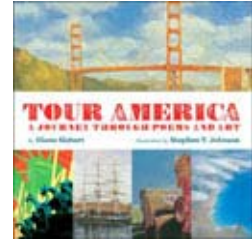
The reunion features food, relatives, and reminiscences before the trip home that seems "twice as far." Thor Wickstrom's amusing illustrations capture both highs and lows of family travel.

Laura Ljungkvist's journey from city to country encourages readers to Follow the Line (Penguin) in a graphic tour de force. Patient viewers can follow the black line from an urban landscape across (and under) the ocean, through skies and forest to a country village. Brightly colored backgrounds and additional drawings create graphic designs for each of the double-spread vistas. For anyone who wants to linger on a page, the author poses a series of questions that encourage closer observation and counting. Perhaps those activities can be done on a second or third reading, after you've convinced yourself that the illustrations really started with one line winding and twisting from one page to the next.



Stephen T. Johnson worked with a wide range of media and in many artistic styles to create illustrations to accompany Diane Siebert's poems in Tour America: A Journey Through Poems and Art (Chronicle). Although many of the books reviewed above employ rhymes or simple verse, Siebert's poetry is longer and more complex. For more than two dozen locations across the United States, Siebert and Johnson offer a verbal and visual tribute. Many of the sights are

familiar, such as Niagara Falls, Old Faithful, and Mount Rushmore. Others, such as the Paul Bunyan statue in Bemidji, Minnesota, receive fewer visitors each year. In addition to the illustration and poem about a place, small inset maps identify the location in the United States, and a prose paragraph supplies additional information about the area. The volume should intrigue armchair travelers and stimulate students who want to document “what I did last summer” in art or poetry.



Bimba Landmann incorporates artistic imagery from her book’s subject in I Am Marc Chagall (Eerdmans). She uses information from Chagall’s autobiography to introduce readers to the Russian farming village where he grew up and to explain its influence on his paintings. Landmann’s collage illustrations include figures, colors, and images taken from Chagall’s artistic works. Despite the upheaval of revolution and his relocation to Germany and France, he managed to produce paintings, mosaics, and stained glass that made his imagery of a vanished Russia famous.

The Illustrator’s Notebook by Mohieddin Ellabbad introduces the work of an Egyptian author and illustrator to North American readers (Groundwood). Ellabbad is well known in the Arabic-speaking world, particularly for his design work that uses Arabic writing itself as part of the illustrations. In this book, designed to be read from right to left, the publisher has left the original illustrations, including Arabic, in tact and provided an English translation in the page margins. Reading “backwards” challenges visual assumptions, such as which direction figures in an illustration face if they are “leaving” or “entering” the picture. In some designs, the words themselves form images, much like concrete poetry in English. Adults as well as those in junior and senior high school can appreciate this introduction to Ellabbad’s art and ideas.

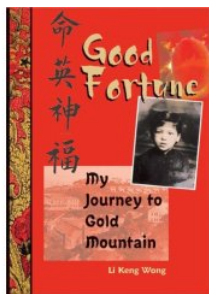


The bilingual picture book by Amy Lee-Tai is based on the experiences of her mother and grandmother at the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah during World War II and offers texts in English and Japanese. A Place Where Sunflowers Grow recounts how the girl Mari and her mother try to grow sunflowers in the desert (Children’s Book Press). Before they were forced to

leave their home in California, they had many flowers in their yard. Both of Mari's parents were artists, and in the Topaz camp, Japanese internees ran art schools. Despite her sadness and disappointment, Mari eventually finds solace in creating artwork that reminds her of the past and provides hope for the future. Felicia Hoshino's illustrations feature muted colors of camp life but incorporate bright spots to remind readers of the hope that endured.

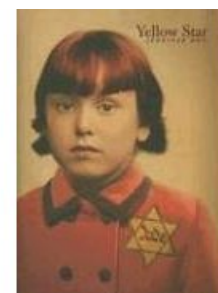


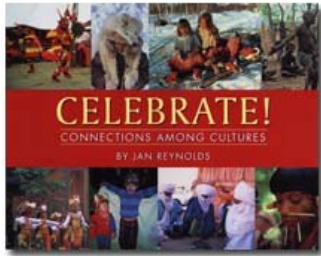
Li Ken Wong recalls her family's journey from China to the United States in 1933 in Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain (Peachtree). Because Chinese immigration was strictly regulated, seven-year-old Li Keng, her mother, and two sisters had to rehearse the answers they



would give to officials so that they would be allowed to join her father in California. Under no circumstances could they reveal that Li Keng's mother and father were married because the U.S. government did not want husbands and wives together. Instead, Li Keng's mother had to pose as her aunt, and the three girls were questioned separately about their relationships. After they were allowed to enter the country, the family still faced economic hardships for many years as the parents struggled to earn a living. The author taught elementary school for over 35 years before providing this interesting and personal perspective on immigration for young readers.

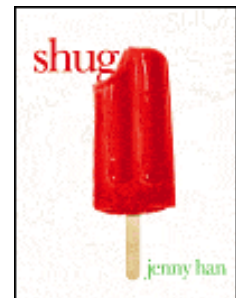
Jennifer Roy based her story of survival on the life of her aunt in Yellow Star (Marshall Cavendish). During World War II, the Germans moved the entire Jewish population of Lodz, Poland, into the ghetto. As the war progressed, they instituted several programs to systematically exterminate all the children there. Roy's aunt Sylvia was one of 12 children who survived. Due to courage, luck, and timely actions by her parents and other adults, Sylvia's immediate family lived through brutal conditions until the Russians arrived in 1945. Told in first person with the language and perspective of a young child, the compelling story drives the reader to discover if and how the Nazis can be outwitted yet again before starvation, sickness, and human cruelty eliminates all the Jews in Poland.





Jan Reynolds calls upon people in every culture to recognize the similarities in their lives. Celebrate! Connections Among Cultures looks at the lives of seven different groups from Inuit to Yanomami and Sami to Balinese to see how they mark important occasions (Lee & Low). Photographs document how people gather to eat, drink, dress up, play music, dance, and use fire as part of various celebrations. As we observe the faces gazing at us from the pages, we can begin to feel part of “one human family” that Reynolds encountered while living with the indigenous peoples included in the book.

Since this summer issue of Book Notes began with books featuring a day in the life of a preschooler, we’ll end with a year in the life of someone in junior high. Actually, Shug by Jenny Han starts at the end of summer, just before 12-year-old Annemarie Wilcox (Shug) and her friends are about to begin junior high (Simon & Schuster). Annemarie’s lifelong friendship with the boy next door has developed into a serious crush, but he doesn’t see her any differently than the tomboy she has always been. Shug feels inferior to her glamorous mother and older sister and longs for a “normal” family instead of her own. Her mother considers herself too attractive and unconventional for their small town and teeters on the brink of alcoholism. Her father is often gone on business trips that extend for longer and longer periods of time. Even Shug’s relationship with her best friend, Elaine, undergoes serious strains when Elaine is wooed by a popular clique. Han’s first novel shows how the quest for self-preservation and popularity can lead people to betray their friends and their own ideals. Yet, there are humorous touches as well as serious discussions. Without a pat ending, Han nevertheless manages to give Shug (and readers) hope that she too will survive junior high.



Reviewer: Kathy Piehl, CCYAB Director

Books reviewed in this issue:

Milgrim, David. Time to Get Up, Time to Go. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0-618-51998-X. \$15.

Hazen, Barbara Shook. Who Is Your Favorite Monster, Mama? Illus. by MaryAnn Kovalski. Hyperion, 2006. ISBN 078681810-7. \$15.99.

Blackstone, Stella. Counting Cockatoos. Illus. by Stephanie Bauer. Barefoot Books, 2006. ISBN 1-905236-31-X. \$15.99.

Gayzagian, Doris. One White Wishing Stone. Illus. by Kristina Swarner. National Geographic, 2006. ISBN 0-7922-5110-5. \$16.95.

Peters, Lisa Westberg. Sleepyhead Bear. Illus. by Ian Schoenherr. HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 0-06-059675-9. \$16.99.

Stewart, Melissa. A Place for Butterflies. Illus. by Higgins Bond. Peachtree, 2006. ISBN 1-56145-357-9. \$16.95.

Hudson, Cheryl Willis. Construction Zone. Photos by Richard Sobol. Candlewick Press, 2006. ISBN 076362684-8. \$15.99.

Gray, Rita. Easy Street. Illus. by Mary Bono. Penguin, 2006. ISBN 0-525-47657-1. \$15.99.

Prince, April Jones. What Do Wheels Do All Day? Illus. by Giles Laroche. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0-618-56307-5. \$16.

Eschbacher, Roger. Road Trip. Illus. by Thor Wickstrom. Penguin, 2006. ISBN 0-8037-2927-8. \$16.99.

Ljungkvist, Laura. Follow the Line. Penguin, 2006. ISBN 0-670-06049-6. \$16.99.

Siebert, Diane. Tour America: A Journey Through Poems and Art. Illus. by Stephen T. Johnson. Chronicle, 2006. ISBN 0-8118-5056-0. \$17.95.

Landmann, Bimba. I Am Marc Chagall. Eerdmans, 2006. ISBN 0-8028-5305-6. \$18.

Ellabab, Mohieddin. The Illustrator's Notebook. Groundwood, 2006. ISBN 0-88899-700-0. \$16.95.

Lee-Tai, Amy. A Place Where Sunflowers Grow. Illus. by Felicia Hoshino. Children's Book Press, 2006. ISBN 0-89239-215-0. \$16.95.

Wong, Li Keng. Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain. Peachtree, 2006. ISBN 1-56145-367-6. \$14.95.

Roy, Jennifer. Yellow Star. Marshall Cavendish, 2006. ISBN 0-7614-5277-X. \$16.95.

Reynolds, Jan. Celebrate! Connections Among Cultures. Lee & Low, 2006. ISBN 1-58430-253-4. \$16.95.

Han, Jenny. Shug. Simon & Schuster, 2006. ISBN 1-4169-0942-7. \$14.95.