

Children

AGES 0-8

Z Goes Home

By Jon Agee

When your young reader is ready to move beyond *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, Jon Agee has created an ABC book with complex words and intricate illustrations. The letter Z gets down from his "Zoo" sign and sets off to meet an Alien, cross a Bridge, encounter a V-shaped Viper, etc. **"It's definitely not an introductory book for a preschooler; rather, a slightly older child who already knows her ABCs and will be taken in by the complexity of the words ('A is for alien L is for labyrinth')"** BARBARA F. MELTZ, BOSTON

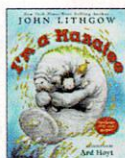
GLOBE, 8/21/03.

"Jon Agee has crafted a clever, splendid abecedary ..." NICHOLAS A. BASBANES, ORLANDO SENTINEL, 8/17/03.



I'm a Manatee

By John Lithgow, illustrated by Ard Hoyt
OK, a few celebrity books are pretty good! This one is a current favorite of the Bookmarks staff's children. Actor (and former member of Harvard's Board of Overseers) Lithgow finds plenty of phrases to rhyme with "manatee" as a boy dreams of being one of the "cows of the sea." Complete with a sing-along CD.



"The well-known actor dons his other hat, that of comic poet genius for kids, in his most gleeful book yet." ELIZABETH WARD, WASHINGTON POST 9/14/03.

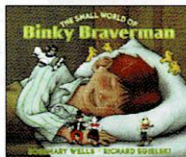
"Vanity, inanity, urbanity, profanity – who would have guessed so much verse could be mined from the word 'manatee'?" ... Well, who could resist?"

CATHERINE REESE NEWTON, THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE, 8/10/03.

The Small World of Binky Braverman

By Rosemary Wells, illustrated by Richard Egelski

Binky Braverman is lonely and out of sorts. He's been sent to live with his aunt and uncle while his parents await the arrival of a new baby. Forced to wear itchy clothes and play gin rummy, it's Binky's worst summer ever. Until, late one night, he wanders into the kitchen to find tiny commercial characters springing forth from their illustrations on boxes and jars. Things just got interesting... The book is beautifully illustrated by Caldecott-winner Egelski.

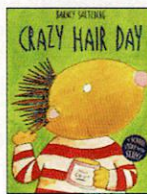


"Veterans Wells and Egelski are perfectly paired in this gentle, idiosyncratic little masterpiece about loneliness, imagination and friendship." ELIZABETH WARD, WASHINGTON POST, 9/14/03.

"This tantalizingly open-ended tale, especially its poignant introduction, explores the overlap between memory and imagination." PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, 8/18/03.

Crazy Hair Day

By Barney Saltzberg
Stanley Birdbaum put considerable effort into preparing for his elementary school's "Crazy Hair Day," ending up with a coil of orange and blue spikes. He made one mistake – "Crazy Hair Day" is next week. Today is Picture Day. Stanley's friend Larry helps him cope with his mistake.



"It's good to see a school friendship story that features two boys. ... Most of us, young and old, can feel his pain and share the happiness at a resolution that is believable." MARY HARRIS RUSSELL, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 9/7/03.

"Books real kids love" HARTFORD COURANT, 8/25/03.

I Only Like What I Like

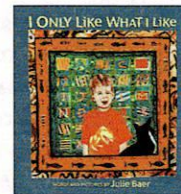
By Julie Baer

Dewey Jackson Braintree-Berg is certain of his tastes: Only round food in the morning, noodles must be in the shape of the alphabet, and he must have a night-light. When he has no choice but to eat a rectangular waffle one morning, he's surprised to find, hey, it's actually pretty good. One by one, Dewey learns his likes, and his rules, can change.

"Julie Baer's collages sometimes project fussy multiplicity and aren't easy for the youngest viewers to piece out, but, like Dewey, they're distinctive."

MARY HARRIS RUSSELL, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 8/10/03.

"An endnote states the publisher's aim to 'make books that don't fall into the normal order of things,' and this tour de force achieves that goal. [The boy] is not the only one who discovers new things here. Readers do, too, among these extraordinary images." MARIANNE SACCARDI, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, 9/03.



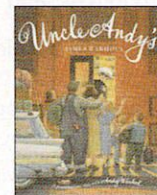
Uncle Andy's

A Faabbbulous Visit with Andy Warhol

By James Warhola

Author James Warhola was the son of a junkman and the nephew of Andy Warhol. Here he recounts one of his family visits to Warhol's home in 1962, about the time Andy Warhol's soup cans debuted. Warhola shares a child's-eye view of Warhol's (tame) eccentricities and of modern art.

"It's clear from this captivating story that James – who became an artist himself, and has illustrated several



children's books – sees himself as the natural product of two environments linked by, basically, junk.” LAURA SHAPIRO,

NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, 5/18/03.

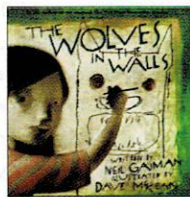
“This fabulous book tells about a visit by James and his large family (eight altogether). We see the artist in a completely different light. James wakes up in a room full of painted wooden cases of tomato soup.” LUCI HAND, THE POST-

TRIBUNE (GARY, INDIANA), 6/12/03.

The Wolves in the Walls

By Neil Gaiman, illustrated by Dave McKean

With every creak and squeek Lucy hears in her old house, she is certain there are wolves in the walls. It turns out she's right – the wolves come out of the walls and Lucy's family is forced to flee to live in the garden.



Once Lucy sees the mess the wolves are making of the house (spilling jam, playing their video games), she leads the charge to take back the family home.

We're big fans of Gaiman's (and McKean's) graphic novels, and while we applaud their children's books (including last year's *Caroline*), parents should take a quick look through the book to make sure it's suitable for their younger children. We've seen a

WE'RE FRESH OUT OF MADONNA HEADLINE PUNS

As we go to press, Madonna's *The English Roses* sits atop the New York Times Best-Seller list for Children's Picture Books. We have seen, and shared, a broad range of reactions:

1) It's sad that the book is not particularly good, but that celebrity culture will make it a huge success

2) Don't blame Madonna – she wrote a passable book, the money is going to charity, and children will enjoy it well enough. What's the harm?

3) This book is the ultimate vanity project. Just like the book's protagonist, Binah, Madonna lost her own mother to cancer at the age of five. Binah is both “beautiful” and just about perfect but greatly misunderstood.

4) The book is just fine. Lighten up!

Looking past these broad proclamations, we think that the most important issues raised by *The English Roses* are more subtle. First, Madonna claims she wrote the book because she didn't think there were very many good children's books available, particularly those that dealt with the tougher realities of life. We imagine that many people share her opinion. If the shelves in the adult section of the bookstore seem cluttered, the array of children's books is equally daunting. Information about the best in children and young adult books is not reaching parents (and others). *Bookmarks* will be working to help solve this problem.

Second, *The English Roses* perpetuates the notion that children's books aren't difficult to write. Certainly some parents have had that thought after wading through a particularly inane book (which must have been a gift, right?). Nothing could be further from the truth; so much separates good enough from great. And the sad truth is that children are not always discerning in the quality of books they read. But the best books offer so much that isn't easily visible – a permanent stirring of the imagination, an appreciation for the best in language and expression, a subtle understanding of different types of people.



★★

The English Roses

By Madonna, illustrated by Jeffrey Fulvimari

The English Roses are four young girls who are the best of friends. Out of jealousy, they shun Binah who is “very, very beautiful,” with “long, silky hair and skin like milk and honey.” She is just about perfect in every way, but the Roses' fairy godmother allows them to see the more difficult truth. Binah's homelife is one of sorrow and drudgery, having lost her mother when she was very young. With this understanding, Binah is welcomed by the Roses.

★★★★ “Now having read *The English Roses*, I am devouring crow. The book should be read to girls in kindergarten and up as an emotional vaccination against the social exclusion and cruel cliques that mar many young girls' lives.”

DEIRDRE DONAHUE, USA TODAY, 9/16/03.

★★★★ “But let's not be blinded by the fairy dust: if Madonna had not written the book, it would not have been reviewed. Its interest is as an accessory for those curious about Madonna.” KATE KELLAWAY, THE GUARDIAN, 9/21/03.

★★ “Madonna told *People* magazine[,] ‘I want to do good things for the world.’ No one expects Madonna to be Mother Teresa, but this reviewer can only say: Keep trying, ‘cause this book ain't it.” STEPHANIE DUNNEWIND, SEATTLE TIMES, 9/20/03.

★★ “... a message is not enough. Madonna has written a book rather than a sermon or a record or a film and it will have to be judged as such. It is not terrible. But it is not much good either.” IAN HISLOP, THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, 9/21/03.

★★ “. . . beautiful to look at but lacks both the distilled poetic brilliance of the best picture books and the subtlety and character development you would expect from the best children's fiction.” ANNE JOHNSTONE, THE HERALD (GLASGOW), 9/16/03.

★ “In other words, Madonna's just a poor little rich girl, and the rest of us only pick on her because we're jealous. There may be something to that. But it doesn't make her first book for children (‘even grown-up ones,’ she suggests on the jacket – ever the crossover artist) any less meretricious, cynical or unimaginative.” DAVID KIPEN, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 9/16/03.

wide range of recommended ages on this book, from “4-8” to “8-11.” *Wolves* is scary and funny, but there’s enough hip graphic cachet to ensure that the authors’ older fans will enjoy picking up the book as well.

“This picture book is not for the nursery set.” MARY HARRIS RUSSELL, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 8/31/03.

“The slyly deadpan text, rich in language and wordplay, never doubts Lucy’s capacity to manage the chaos, but McKean’s illustrations are something else again, their mixed-media creepiness giving the lie to the publisher’s disingenuous “all ages” designation and marking it clearly as not for the faint of heart.” KIRKUS REVIEWS, 7/1/03.

Intermediate

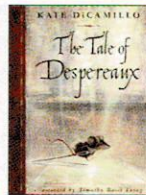
AGES 9-12

Tale of Despereaux

Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread

By Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Timothy B. Ering

DiCamillo is the author of the Newbery Honor book *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Here she is the omniscient narrator, telling the tale of Despereaux



Tilling, a mouse who confounds his family by refusing to conform. Instead, he falls in love with a human princess, is thrown into a dungeon with rats, and unites with a cast of outsiders while trying to save the kidnapped princess. Complete with Victorian, “Dear Reader” asides: “Do you think rats do not have hearts? Wrong. All living things have a heart.”

“And as with the best stories, there are important messages tucked in here and there, so subtly that children who are carried away by the words won’t realize they have been uplifted until much lat-

er.” ILENE COOPER, BOOKLIST.

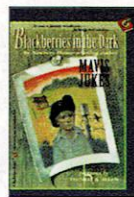
“With a masterful hand, DiCamillo weaves four story lines together in a witty, suspenseful narrative that begs to be read aloud. ... This expanded fairy tale is entertaining, heartening, and, above all, great fun.” MIRIAM LANG BUDIN, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL.

“Reader, I will let you imagine, for now, how these witticisms of our omniscient narrator come into play; but I must tell you, you are in for a treat.” PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, 6/16/03.

Blackberries in the Dark

By Mavis Jukes

This 1985 book by Newbery honor-winning Jukes was recently re-released in hardcover. Nine-year-old Austin visits his grandmother for the first time since his grandfather died. Together they reminisce of the last time Austin saw his grandfather for a day of fishing and an evening of picking blackberries. *Blackberries* is a spare, elegant look at how we cope with death.



“Every now and then children’s books try to tackle the impossible problem of losing someone you love. This book ... is one of the best I’ve ever read.” PETER MANDEL, PROVIDENCE JOURNAL, 7/3/02.

“[Pick of the Week] Like the warmest family memory, Jukes’ *Blackberries* proves evergreen, as do Thomas B. Allen’s perceptive pencil illustrations.”

JULIA BOOKMAN, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION, 8/25/02.

“The adventure Austin and his grandmother are about to have will teach them (and us) not only about filling the void left by death but about crossing all the other barriers the world has placed on age and gender and circumstance.”

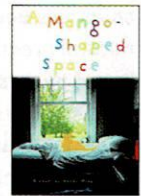
PATRICIA HOLT, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 12/25/85.

Mango-Shaped Space

By Wendy Mass

Thirteen-year-old Mia sees the world differently from other people

— sights and sounds are combined in her head so that letters have colors and shapes have sounds. Some people even have auras, including her cat. Mia



has kept her condition a secret until school subjects like algebra create new difficulties: “normally an x is a shiny maroon color...but here an x has to stand for an unknown number...and there are no maroon-colored numbers” She is soon diagnosed as having “synesthesia” and is enthralled with meeting others who share who condition. In the process, she loses touch with her best friend, starts meeting boys, and has more trouble at school. There are too many subplots, but Mia is a strong character and Mass’s descriptions of synesthesia are both realistic and fascinating.

“There’s a little too much going on here ... Nevertheless, readers will be intrigued with Mass’s fictional depiction of an actual, and fascinating, condition.” JENNIFER M. BRABANDER, HORN BOOK MAGAZINE, JULY/AUG 2003.

“Although the story line, at times, seems cluttered with underdeveloped subplots about Mia’s friendships, potential romances and conflicts at school, the novel’s premise is interesting enough to keep pages turning.”

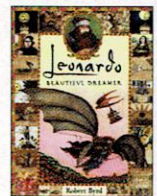
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, 4/14/03.

Leonardo

Beautiful Dreamer

By Robert Byrd

A wonderful introduction to Leonardo Da Vinci — the text and illustrations are as widely varied as Da Vinci’s interests. His life story provides the backbone of the book, but author Byrd follows flights of fancy on each page: quotes, anecdotes, and drawings echo the overflowing of Da Vinci’s mind.



"Don't be in a hurry here. ... The book may look slim, but it's a long, rich read." MARY HARRIS RUSSELL, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 7/13/03.

"The author packs the book with information and illustrations inspired by da Vinci's own copious notebooks and takes us on an educational journey through da Vinci's amazing thought process. ... Byrd's book is one to be pored over again and again for insight into this remarkable man and his times." SUE STAUFFACHER, THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS, 8/2/03.

"... less a complete biography than a celebration of his inquiring spirit and creative vision." PETER D. SIERUTA, HORN BOOK MAGAZINE, SEPT/OCT 2003.

Young Adult AGES 13 AND UP

The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things

By Carolyn Mackler

Virginia Shreves is an overweight sophomore operating far outside the popular cliques at her private Manhattan high school. Her adolescent psychologist mother frets over Virginia's weight, her father is seldom around, her big sister joined the Peace Corps, and her idealized older brother at college was just accused of date rape. That's a lot of teen angst, and if Mackler occasionally takes things over the top, her writing and ability to deal with serious topics saves the day.

"Body image problems, family discord, a teenage contrarian narrating – is this anything new? Yes, because 15-year-old Virginia Shreves is so well-constructed a character that we like spending time with her." MARY HARRIS RUSSELL, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 8/31/03.

"Virginia's transition from an insecure girl desperate for her family's approval



to a confident young woman might be a little messagey, but it's believable, and she doesn't do it on her own." JENNIFER M. BRABANDER, HORN BOOK MAGAZINE, SEPT/OCT 2003.

The Gospel According to Larry

By Janet Tashjian

(Recently reissued in paperback)

Remember the Christian Slater movie, *Pump Up the Volume*, about a student who starts a pirate radio station? How dated! Now any self-respecting 12-year-old intellectual discontent would start a web site. And so Josh does, masquerading as "Larry" and railing against empty consumer culture. Beth, both Josh's best friend and his crush, loves the mythical "Larry," but in real life is flirting with a football player. How will Josh reveal his alter-ego to Beth? Or will the world, caught up in a Larry media frenzy, do it for him?



"A terrific read with a credible and foible main character." FRANCISCA GOLDSMITH, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, OCT 2001.

"The author gets all the notes just right – the wired adolescent passions, the destructive effects of the media spotlight, and the technology. Unlike so many authors writing about computers and the Internet, Tashjian doesn't try to convince the reader of her expertise. She just tells her story, in Josh's convincing voice, and doesn't shy away from following her premises to logical conclusion." MATT BERMAN, TIMES - PICAYUNE, 3/10/02.

"In a conclusion both bizarre and poignant, Josh must find a way to reconcile his beliefs with his fame, and to come to terms with his passion for consumer issues along with his own, altogether human, longings. Crisply told in Josh's witty, wisecracking, and sometimes self-deprecating voice, *The Gospel According to Larry* is a clever

wake-up call to the perils of consumerism for the sensitive and passionate teenage generation." COURTNEY WILLIAMSON, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, 9/5/02. ■

WILLIAM STEIG: 1907-2003

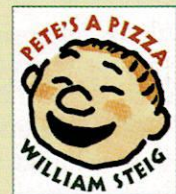
William Steig, the author of *Shrek* (the 1990 picture book upon which the movie was based), passed away in early October. Steig had been writing and illustrating notable children's books for many years.

Now 1998

Pete's A Pizza

by William Steig

A red eye-catcher of a book, still prominent on bookstore shelves. It's about how moods change and how a little game can help. As Dad lays a grumpy boy on the kitchen table and proceeds to make a pizza of him, it's hard to stay solemn. "America will be a better place if the Steig family pizza party catches on." SIGNE WILKINSON, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW. (FOR AGES 3-6)



Then 1970

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

by William Steig

✦ Caldecott Medal, 1970

This is our favorite book by Steig, and a lot of fun to read to a group of second graders. It's been chosen as one of the 100 Best Books of the Century by the NEA. A young donkey uses a magic wish to escape a hungry lion. He quickly turns himself into a rock. Now what can he do about that? (FOR AGES 4-8)

