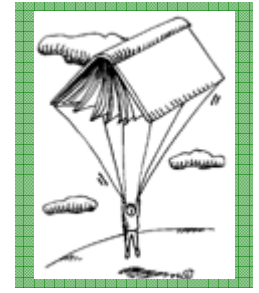
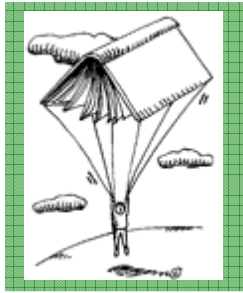


The S.E.L.E.C.T. S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook



Educate
Select and Evaluate Literature to Empower Children & Teachers
Entertain
Excite

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Spring 2007

Francesca Pomerantz, Editor
Kaitlin Frasca-Moses, Assistant Editor
Education Resource Library, second floor of the Salem State College Library
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About the S.E.L.E.C.T. Books at Salem State College

The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook Newsletter shares information about new children's books with teachers and Salem State College faculty. The reviewed books in this newsletter are a preview of the new books that are available for examination in The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook, a corner of the Education Resource Library at Salem State College. Teachers, school librarians, and administrators are invited to visit and examine new children's literature. The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook is open when the Education Resource Library is open. For further information about The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook or for specific hours that The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook is open, please call the Education Resource Library at (978) 542-6767. The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook was founded by Dr. Jo Ann Brewer and the late Dr. Diane Bushner and is made possible through the generosity of the following publishers:

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About the Book Reviews

Book reviews are written by undergraduate and graduate students studying children's literature in courses at Salem State College, as well as by faculty teaching the courses. The book reviews printed here are excerpted from longer papers.

The Book Reviewers: Spring 2007 Edition

The book reviews printed in this edition of the newsletter were written by graduate students enrolled in EDU 767: *Literature for Young Children*, as well as Francesca Pomerantz, Assistant Professor of Education, Cletus Cervoni, Assistant Professor of Education and Kaitlin Frasca-Moses, Bushner Graduate Assistant.

Cover illustrations are reprinted on the web site courtesy of the listed publishers.

The Greatest Game Ever Played
Phil Bildner
Illustrated by Zachary Pullen
G.P. Putnam's Sons

The Greatest Game Ever Played is a poignant (yes, poignant) football story recommended for ages 6 and up that begs to be shared between generations. Sam and his Pop are die-hard New York Giants fans, spending hours together at the baseball stadium. In the spring of 1957, Pop loses his job and takes another one with longer hours. Sam spends baseball season selling snow-cones instead of watching baseball games with his father. To make matters worse, the long-circulating rumor becomes true: the New York Giants are leaving for California. Sam and his Pop are devastated. Then, Sam discovers *another* New York Giants team: the New York Giants football team. Professional football is in its infancy and has yet to gain widespread popularity. Right before Christmas, Sam is given a pair of tickets to Yankee Stadium to see the football Giants play the Indianapolis Colts. Yearning to spend time with his father, Sam tries to convince his father to give football a chance. Pop reluctantly agrees. Sam and his Pop are there to see the *Greatest Game Ever Played*. The story is based on the now legendary football game between the New York Giants and the Indianapolis Colts on December 28, 1958. Author Phil Bildner features some of the famous players of that era, including Frank Gifford and Johnny Unitas, in the story. Bildner's description of the football game draws the reader into a cold Yankee Stadium 48 years ago. The characters are engaging, including brief appearances by Sam's mother. The reader feels as if he or she is sitting next to Sam and his father as they cheer on their new team and recapture some special time with each other. Zachary Pullen's illustrations beautifully capture the feeling of the late 1950s. The illustration of Sam pouring over his football memorabilia is especially detailed. Parents sharing this book with their children will want to share special stories and memories of their childhood, especially stories about times shared with a parent or favorite adult. Grandparents may remember the famous football game and pass the story on to another generation. Pair this book with Matt Tavares' *Oliver's Game* for a nostalgic look at professional sports.

Caroline Hammond

Backbeard and the Birthday Suit: The Hairiest Pirate Who Ever Lived
Nicole Gastonguay
Illustrated by Matthew McElligott
Walker and Company

Aaaarghh me hearties! Backbeard, the hairiest pirate who ever lived, has a fashion sense that even Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) would be proud of. Backbeard is the most stubborn, loudest, hairiest pirate to sail the five seas, respected and feared by all. But Backbeard has a problem. After a wild and rowdy pirate birthday party, Backbeard's suit is ruined and, due to his unsanitary ways, his parrot quits! What is a captain to do? Walk the plank? No, shopping! So the human throw rug makes his way to town to find himself a new suit and mascot. Backbeard locates a shop and demands a pirate jacket, a buccaneer hat, a new eye patch and a parrot from a very frightened clerk. Shiver me timbers! The shop doesn't have those things! The clerk outfits Backbeard in a flamboyant suit complete with a pink coat, green striped pants and a pig for a mascot! The perfect ensemble for pillaging this season! At first Backbeard thinks he looks like a "sissy," his crew doesn't recognize their own captain and it looks like stormy seas. After Backbeard shows the scallywags who is boss, the crew is ready for a pirate style heart to heart. As long as Backbeard is content with his new chic so is the rest of the crew. After all, he still is the loudest, toughest, hairiest pirate to sail the seas. The clothes don't make the pirate, the pirate makes the clothes is the message of this book, reminding us all that what we look like on the outside doesn't matter, as long as we have treasure on the inside!

Backbeard is a humorous tale, perfect for read alouds (provided the reader can do a mean pirate voice). Simple but effective, Backbeard was enhanced by the original illustrations and art work. The artist used pencil, fabric, photography, and digital techniques to create the illustrations for the book, and, in fact, all the textures and colors throughout the book are photographs of real objects. The varied media creates a very unique, whimsical look. In conclusion, this was a lighthearted, enjoyable read; McElligott doesn't have to swab the poop deck! *Backbeard and the Birthday Suit* is treasure for any young reader!

Courtney Connell

The Moon

Robert Louis Stevenson

Illustrated by Tracey Campbell Pearson
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Robert Louis Stevenson is most famous for his masterpiece *Treasure Island*, but he has also been acclaimed for his beautiful poetry, captured movingly in this version of *The Moon* through the watercolor illustrations of Tracey Campbell Pearson.

The pages of this book flow with the lyrical rhythm of poetry and the detailed glowing illustrations that effortlessly support the words. A full bright moon is ever present on each page as a father and son embark on a boat trip to explore the night under the light of the moon. While they are driving to the water and sailing their boat, they experience only things that can happen at night, like the birds sleeping or the bats waking. With the family cat and dog in tow, father and son board their boat to sail around the cove, soaking in the stillness of the night. It is a peaceful story that shows a sweet bond between father and son under the watchful eye of the moon.

The theme of this book is comfort. The presence of the moon on the pages of the book is repetitious and predictable which appeals to young children. The way the father and son interact so tenderly throughout the story leaves the reader with a sense of warmth and security. The illustrations are so detailed that they tell a story all their own. I believe this book is suitable for grades Pre-K through fifth. It can be used across the curriculum with a language arts focus on poetry or the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, a science focus on the moon and/or nocturnal animals, or a math focus on patterns. I really enjoyed this book and recommend it to fellow parents and teachers.

E. White

Fluffy and Baron

Lauren Rankin

Dial Books for Young Readers

Who would have thought a relationship between a German Shepard and a duck could be so sweet? The well-told narrative, *Fluffy and Baron*, based on the author Lauren Rankin's childhood pets, chronicles the friendship between these two animals.

Baron, the dog, and Fluffy, the baby duck, have a perfect companionship. Fluffy meets Baron one summer day when she is just a little duckling. They enjoy their days and nights together sharing food, sleeping quarters and playtime. But when spring comes, Fluffy takes an interest in the wild flock of ducks at the pond. Fluffy finds the ducks so interesting she decides to waddle toward her new found friends and leave her faithful companion, Baron, behind. When the wild ducks fly away, loyal Baron is there waiting for Fluffy. But then Fluffy busies herself with getting her nest ready and, eventually, hatching her nine eggs. Once the eggs hatch, Baron is able to romp, play, eat, sleep and cuddle with nine brand-new friends, but best of all, his old friend, Fluffy is with him again. This delightful tale teaches children that, in the end, loyalty is rewarded.

Rankin's realistic acrylic and ink illustrations jump off the page and into your heart. The life-like farm and country illustrations are visually appealing. The animated expression in Baron's eyes makes the reader connect with his feelings. The illustrations make this a delightful story-hour book. The appendix of the book has an author's note which includes information about duck behavior.

Joanne Wheeler

Just in Case
Judith Viorst
Illustrated by Diana Cain
Bluthenthal
Atheneum

Charlie is a young boy who is ready for any emergency in the story *Just in Case*. This picture book is a humorous look at some of the fears of a young child. It starts with the fear of his house flooding and what he can do to protect himself. Some of Charlie's additional worries include the wrong babysitter coming, a food shortage, and getting carried off by a mermaid. These are just a few of the hilarious situations that Charlie has a plan for. This story is funny and unpredictable. It will have children laughing out loud when they read what Charlie will do to the mermaid if she tries to catch him. (He'll wrap her up in the fishing net he just happened to bring in case a mermaid tries to catch him.) The main theme of the story is that Charlie is always ready, but his family has a surprise for him at the end of the story. Charlie realizes that it is okay, sometimes, not to be ready. This book is an enjoyable read aloud for young children. Diana Cain Bluthenthal's illustrations are vivid and life-like. When you look at the characters' expressions and body language, you can feel their emotions. The repetitive text will have children reading along with you, saying the words "just in case." Judith Viorst does it again with her wonderful style and ability to tap into children's emotions. This book will be a welcome addition to any classroom library.

Marybeth Wall

Rotten Richie and the Ultimate Dare
Patricia Polacco
Philomel

Patricia Polacco's phenomenal book, *Rotten Richie and the Ultimate Dare*, masterfully introduces the age-old conflict of sibling rivalry. The subject matter is perfectly, effectively, and efficiently treated in this appealing and delightful tale of conflict between a brother and sister. By telling the story through the eyes of Trisha and her brother Richie, Polacco dramatically details the fighting, competition, and ultimate resolution of this sibling rivalry.

Trisha, a young ballet dancer, and her red-headed, older brother, Richie, an ice hockey player, have a particularly difficult time adjusting to a new school environment when the family moves from Union City to Battle Creek. They verbally spar with one another over the usual brother-sister conflicts. The issue of whose activity is more demanding, dance or ice hockey, creates an unusual amount of turmoil between Trisha and Richie. Finally, tiring of the verbal exchanges, Trisha challenges her brother, in front of his peers, to participate in her dance recital. Richie accepts Trisha's challenge on one condition~ she has to take part in one of his ice hockey games. Trisha immediately accepts Richie's dare and the competition is set.

As the story recounts the trials and tribulations of the events leading up to the ice hockey game and the dance recital, the siblings are charmingly and pleasantly transformed from determined adversaries to fervent supporters. Trisha and Richie soon learn the special qualities and characteristics each possesses and demonstrates during the challenges. They discover how to get along and establish a close relationship based on mutual respect and admiration.

The primary characters, Trisha and Richie, are fully developed with headstrong, but lovable, qualities that appeal to the reader's imagination. Both characters initially exhibit the stereotypical traits~ Trisha, the traditional, dainty ballerina, and Richie, the rough and tough ice hockey player. However, Polacco cleverly reverses these roles. The story and accompanying illustrations are well suited for readers in grades 3 through 5. Readers who enjoy this narrative should also consider other books by Patricia Polacco, such as *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*, *Something about Hensley's*, *Emma Kate*, *The Graves Family Goes Camping*, and *Picnic at Mudsock Meadows*. These books, like *Rotten Richie and the Ultimate Dare*, deal with how young people cope with real life situations.

Norma Miaskiewicz

Kaitlin's Kindergarten Corner

Books reviews in collaboration with the Kinderhaus at the River Valley Charter School

Clockwise: A Time-Telling Tale

Sara Pinto

Bloomsbury

Sara Pinto's book, *Clockwise*, is a great combination of time-telling facts and a lovely story about a boy named Thomas who is eager to learn how to tell time. In the story, Thomas is wondering about the language of "time" as he is always hearing phrases such as, "It's quarter to eight." and "It's half-past three", but every time he sees the clock in the kitchen, he can't figure it out. With the help of a friendly woman at the clock store, he begins to understand which phrases correspond to which time. Just as children learn to tell time, Thomas learns about hours first, moving the short hand around the clock. Then, on a return trip to the clock store, the minute hand is introduced. As the story progresses, Thomas learns how to tell time and how to use the expressions he has heard the adults in his life use. Through life-like dialogue and realistic illustrations including clocks with time corresponding to each aspect of the story, Sara Pinto captures the essence of a young boy who is eager to learn about the world around him. This book is a great resource for teachers and parents who are introducing time to their children.

Betty Lou Blue

Nancy Crocker; Illustrated by Boris Kulikov

Penguin

Is there something different about you? Do you feel like you stand out in the crowd for all the wrong reasons? If so, *Betty Lou Blue*, is the book for you! Nancy Crocker's rhyming storybook tells the tale of Betty Lou who is embarrassed by her exceptionally large feet that cause the other children at school to tease her. Her mother is always reminding her that her feet aren't different, they are special and that she should embrace her unique quality, but that is hard to do. Betty Lou is often standing on the outside of the group, afraid of being picked on by the other kids. She is struggling to see that it is not a bad thing to be different than everyone else. However, one day she'll find out that her big feet come in handy and that what a person has on the inside is more important than what they look like on the outside! This book is a great addition to any classroom library and its message is pertinent to read to young children.

Diamond in the Snow

Jonathan Emmett; Illustrated by Vanessa Cabban

Candlewick

Diamond in the Snow tells the tale of little Mole who is amazed at the beauty of a single icicle he finds in the woods on a snowy winter day. Unaware that his new found treasure is an icicle, Mole takes his "diamond" on a long walk through the woods to show his friends. Along the way, his diamond begins to change shape which leads Mole to believe that his diamond possess magical powers. Unfortunately, his icicle melts before he gets to his animals friends who are enjoying a snowball fight. Saddened, Mole and his friends trudge back to where he had first found the diamond to see a wondrous sight! Reading this book on a snowy afternoon grabs the children's attention and ignites their imagination to find beauty in nature, even in a simple icicle as Mole had.

Children's Literature and Science Topics
Reviews by Cletus Cervoni, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor at Salem State College

Frog Heaven: Ecology of a Vernal Pool
Doug Wechsler
Boyd's Mills Press

Vernal Pools are an important habitat in New England for amphibians. These small depressions in the earth fill up in spring with rainwater and shortly after, frogs and salamanders slip and slide their way into these pools to breed. *Frog Heaven* is the story of these pools and the animals that inhabit them. The photographs are fabulous and the book is an excellent classroom resource for the study of plants and animals and the relationships among them. If you should have a vernal pool in or around your schoolyard there is a state program that helps children and schools certify them so they have some protection from development.

Marvelous Mattie: How Margaret Knight Became an Inventor
Emily Arnold McCully
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Marvelous Mattie is indeed a marvelous little girl who, both as a young girl and then as a woman, likes to invent things that solve problems for people. As a young girl growing up in the late 1800's, Mattie loved to tinker with objects around her house, designing things like a foot warmer for her mother. At the age of twelve, after seeing an accident in the factory where she worked, she designed a metal guard to prevent shuttles from shooting off looms and hurting workers. This is a wonderful book that will inspire girls (and boys) of all ages who are interested in inventing and engineering. Given the lack of girls and women who are going into the engineering sciences, this is a much needed resource on careers in science.

Gakky Two-Foot
Micky Dolenz
Illustrated by David Clark
G. P. Putnam's Sons

Evolution is a difficult topic for children to understand. *Gakky Two-Foot* helps by showing through a story how animals could have evolved. This story, written by the former Monkee band member Mickey Dolenz, is about a furry animal in Africa who is different from all of the other animals in his family because he walks on two feet instead of four. Gakky is often teased by others for being different. He replies to his critics by saying "it just feels better." Yet in the end, his fleet of foot enables him to swiftly save another animal from being eaten by a lion. His two legs saved the day and he is rewarded with a kiss and a berry! Besides being a primer on evolution and how it could have happened, this book handles the issue of being different in a nice and thoughtful way.

Saving Manatees
Stephen Swinburne
Boyd's Mills Press

Once while on vacation in Florida, I was fortunate to see a manatee in the wild. I say fortunate because manatees are an endangered species and as such are protected by state and federal laws. Manatees are large, torpedo-shaped, ocean-dwelling animals found primarily in the southeastern United States, but also in the Caribbean and as far south as the Brazilian coast. Their numbers have dwindled because of waterfront development and unlimited boat speeds. This book tells the story of the manatee and its natural history through photographs. The author includes facts about manatees interspersed with stories of his own encounters with them along the coast of Florida. Included are also suggestions for further reading and web sites that students can check out. This is a great resource for a class that wants to study endangered species in the United States.

In Brief **Editor's Picks**

Three Little Cajun Pigs
Mike Artell
Illustrated by Jim Harris
Dial Books for Young Readers

This is the three little pigs set in Bayou country with a Louisiana lilt. A wonderful read-aloud told in rhyme you can't help but read with a "Loo-siana" accent ("Go build you a house of you own," Mama say. You'll sleep dere tonight if you start right away.") This version of the story emphasizes the lesson imbedded in the folktale: Taking easy short cuts doesn't pay and hard work is rewarded. *Three Little Cajun Pigs* is a good introduction to themes and lessons in folktales, a discussion about dialect and accent in the U.S., and a study of the different versions of the tale. Recommended ages: Pre-K-9.

Library Lion
Michelle Knudsen
Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes
Candlewick Press

There's a lion in the library who loves books and story hour. As long as he is quiet, he can stay. But one day, his friend, Miss Merriweather, the librarian falls from a ladder and breaks her arm. When he roars to get help from Mr. McBee, the other librarian, he is misunderstood. Mr. McBee tells him he is breaking the rules. The lion knows that anyone who breaks the rules has to leave the library and off he goes. But, as Miss Merriweather, says, "Sometimes there is a good reason to break the rules. Even in the library." When Mr. McBee realizes Miss Merriweather misses the lion and that he caused the lion's disappearance, he finds the sad lion and tells him, "There's a new rule at the library. No roaring allowed, unless you have a very good reason – say, if you're trying to help a friend who's been hurt, for example." Beautiful paint and pencil illustrations will keep young readers highly engaged in this exploration of rules and when to follow them.

Recommended ages: Pre-K-7.

Tiger of the Snows: Tenzing Norgay: The Boy Whose Dream Was Everest
Robert Burleigh
Illustrated by Ed Young
Simon & Schuster

The true story of Tenzing Norgay told as a poem with stunning and startlingly beautiful illustrations by Caldecott winner, Ed Young. In 1953, Norgay and Edmund Hillary became the first people to reach the summit of Mt. Everest. Norgay is celebrated in this book for realizing his dream of ascending to the top of the world and for his determination and bravery in doing so. This is a wonderful addition to other literature about Mt. Everest and should be part of any unit that explores the topic, adding Norgay's perspective first as a local Sherpa boy and then as an adult climber. The book also encourages an exploration of figurative language and poetry and how these forms can enhance our understanding and appreciation of factual information.

Recommended ages: Seven – adult.

For You Are a Kenyan Child
Kelly Cunnane
Illustrated by Ana Juan
Atheneum

This story takes readers into a day in the life of a Kalenjin boy in Kenya as he takes his grandfather's cows to pasture, eats *chepatis* and bugs from the sky, sees monkeys, and kicks a rag ball with his friend. Distracted by all of the fun things to do, the boy forgets to watch the cows and they leave the pasture. Fortunately, he discovers his grandfather leading the cows home and all is well. Sprinkled with Swahili phrases, this is an engaging read-aloud that can lead to a discussion about childhood and neighborhoods in different countries and cultures.

Recommended ages: Pre-K – 7.

Writing Magic: Creating Stories that Fly
Gail Carson Levine
Harper Collins

Newbery author of *Ella Enchanted* shares her writing process with children and teenagers. As Levine states in the first chapter, "This is a book about writing fiction. But it should help you write anything..." Levine shares ideas for getting started with fiction writing, developing characters, writing dialogue, crafting good beginnings, and revising, among other topics. The book is funny and the ideas inspiring. Each chapter invites the reader to try an aspect of fiction writing. For example, to try writing the beginning of a story, Levine suggests several scenarios, including "I have one green eye and one brown eye. The green eye sees truth, but the brown eye sees much, much more." This is a must-have book for all aspiring writers, and especially for those who struggle to get started or to revise.

Recommended ages: Ten and up.

Epossumondas Saves the Day
Coleen Salley; Illustrated by Janet Stevens
Harcourt

This is one of the most original children's books to come along in a while. Epossumondas is a little possum (in a diaper) who lives with his human mama in southern Louisiana. It's his birthday and Mama needs baking soda (known as sody sallyraytus in this part of southern Louisiana) to make his favorite dessert. Each party guest is sent to get the baking soda but is eaten by a snapping turtle on his/her way back from the store. Finally, Epossumondas goes in search of everyone who has disappeared, buys several boxes of baking soda, meets the snapping turtle, and feeds him baking soda to prevent being eaten himself. The snapping turtle puffs up "like a big, light, fluffy biscuit" and explodes. The party guests tumble out and the birthday party can commence. Children will love joining in on the refrain, "Sody! Sody! Sody sallyraytus!" chanted by each guest as he/she goes to the store, as well as the adorable possum in a diaper.

Recommended ages: Three and up.

Francesca Pomerantz, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor, Education