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## Children's Books

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## Children's Books

### Dragons!

*The Dragons are Singing Tonight* by Jack Prelutsky. Illustrated by Peter Sis. ISBN: 0-688-09645-X. 1993. 40 pp. US\$15.00 *Komodo*. Written and illustrated by Peter Sis. ISBN: 0-688-11583-7. 1993. 32 pp. US\$15.00. Each of these books is published by Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019.

Jack Prelutsky's new volume of poetry, *The Dragons are Singing Tonight*, is devoted to the songs of many different dragons — dragons imaginary and elusive, morose and introspective, tiny and feisty, or loudly thunderous.

This captivating book may certainly be enjoyed on two levels, for Peter Sis' splendid artistry stands alone and demands full attention — as well as being companion to the enchanting poetry. Prelutsky fills this book with the songs of dragons, "songs [I] can only hear one night a year."

In *Komodo*, Peter Sis once again allows readers a glimpse into his imaginary "dragon world." The story is short and simple, following a boy and his tourist parents to the Indonesian island of Komodo to view the large reptiles called dragons. On the large, colorful pages dragons sinuously wind through emerald landscapes, and playfully hide in unexpected places. And yes, the little boy meets a dragon! (SDC)



## Two adventures for young boys

*Timothy Twinge.* Written by Florence Parry and Roxanne Heide Pierce. Illustrated by Barbara Lehman. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-10762-1. 1993. 32 pp. US\$14.00.

Shelly Schragg

Sonoma Elementary, Harper Community Schools

Timothy Twinge's vivid and boisterous imagination has caused him to worry about things that might happen to him and his surroundings. In his fantasy, his ordinary, everyday life is turned into one frightful experience after another. Timothy starts his day concerned about his own fate and soon discovers as he reaches for his hands and feet that he's all complete. He panicked and thought he had melted in his sleep. His day continues as he goes to the grocery store and fears the shelves are actually flat jaws that grab at your hand if you reach too far back on the shelf for an item. The exciting part of the story is the ending. Timothy Twinge unlocks the mystery of his fears and becomes the Ruler of the Galaxy. The illustrations capture Timothy's fears and make them come to life. The rhyming text depicts Timothy's thoughts about the world and how it can be filled with monsters or terrible events — those fears which seem so real to young children.

*Time To Get Out.* Written and illustrated by Fulvio Testa. Tambourine Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-12907-2. 1993. US\$14.00.

Janet Chupka, Battle Creek Public Schools

Join a young boy who takes a wonderful adventure to a tropical island full of animals, exploration and danger. Just when all is lost the young boy is jolted back to reality by his mother telling him it is time to get out of the bathtub! This

imaginative adventure is similar to Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Testa captures your attention with the bright, simple illustrations. He creates a curiosity which lends itself to prediction as you join the character's exploration to discover what the mysterious noises are.



*I Love You As Much*. Written by Laura Krauss Melmed. Illustrated by Henri Sorensen. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11718-X. 1993. 24 pp. US\$14.00.

Shelly Schragg

Sonoma Elementary, Harper Community Schools

A tender heart-warming story, *I Love You As Much...* conveys how a mother's love is unconditional and never-ending for her young. The author utilizes mother animals and their babies using simple analogies: "said the mother whale to her child, I love you as much as the ocean is deep." The watercolor illustrations are as heartwarming as the text. The passage reminds the reader how precious mothers and their young truly are. This book would be a wonderful springboard to an activity that would have the children create their own books for those special people: "*Mom, I love you as much...*"

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## A biography for children

*Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare.* Written by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema. Illustrated by Diane Stanley. Morrow Junior Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-09108-3. 1992. 48 pp. US\$15.00.

Sherry Myers, Kalamazoo Public Schools

*Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare* is a first-rate picture book biography. The facts, from the author's note at the beginning to the postscript, are intriguing, readable and honest. There remains much mystery about Shakespeare's life, and the book is quick to point this out, saying "we don't know" rather frequently and honestly. However, what is known and speculated about his life is reported in fine fashion. Shakespeare becomes a real person and his time period much clearer to any reader.

Much of the book explains the theater of the time, including the political climate, the actual stagings, the history of the playhouses, the nature of the audiences who attended the plays, and the actors in the troupe. The breadth of this information and the interesting tidbits, such as actor Will Kemps dancing 111 miles from London to Norwich as a publicity stunt, keep the story lively and entertaining as well as informative. The lengthy and fascinating postscript tells us about the language of the period, from the lack of consistent spelling (even on the cover of the first English dictionary) to the number of words and phrases Shakespeare added to the language. A good bibliography is also included, noting texts appropriate to younger readers.

The potential audience for this portrait of Shakespeare is a wide one. Certainly, it could be read aloud to children from

about age seven, but it is also appropriate for middle and high school readers as they begin their study of Shakespeare's plays. The art in the book is lively and appealing, as well as being accurate in terms of what we know of the theaters and dress of the period. The four-color, full page illustrations are done in gouache, an opaque watercolor, and the result is a blend of simple folk-art and high detail. This painstaking reliance on accuracy and detail in both the text and the art makes *Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare* a welcome addition to any library, as well as suitable for "coffee table" display.

*Alamo Across Texas*. Written by Jill Stover. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11712-0. 1993. 32 pp. US\$13.00.

Sherry Myers, Kalamazoo Public Schools

Alamo is an alligator, content with his life along the Lavaca River in southern Texas. He has everything he needs: water, fish, shade, and friends. Then a draught dries up the river, and all of these things disappear. Alamo begins a trek to find a new home. He tries a ranch, the ocean, a swimming pool, and a city, but none of them is right. Now, there is no more water to be found in the whole state. Exhausted, Alamo falls asleep under a cactus in a dry river bed. While he sleeps, the rain starts, and Alamo drifts down the river. When he awakens, he is home.

Stover tells a simple story, but one that will engage young listeners. It is a tale that they will soon be able to tell as the pages are turned, and in the process they will learn about a place within the United States very different from much of the rest of the country. The bright, four-color drawings vividly illustrate the varied and sometimes exotic landscapes of our second largest state. The use of color is especially fine, making the book very visually pleasing. This, in combination

with the short text, make it an ideal choice for reading aloud to a group. The last page of the book maps Alamo's trek around Texas, providing an opportunity to find Texas on a U.S. map and to talk about climate and topographical differences.



*I Spy Two Eyes.* Written by Jill Stover. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11712-0. 1993. 32 pp. US\$13.00.

In the magnificent array of recent alphabet books, Lucy Micklethwait's *I SPY: An Alphabet in Art* is a standout. Now she has followed that enchanting collection with a counting book, *I Spy Two Eyes*, whose title is her caption to match Karel Appel's brilliantly colored painting, "Cry for Freedom."

Many of the twenty artists whose work is represented here are well known: a Van Gogh painting shows eight boats, a Rubens, nine children. Other artists are less familiar: Thomas Cooper Gotch, whose blissful "Alleluia" presents thirteen singers; Fernand Leger, in whose intricate, bright abstract "Divers On a Yellow Background" fifteen hands and feet are tangled; Robert Indiana, whose poster art "American Dream" shows nineteen stars. An endnote gives brief information about each of the paintings, and lists the museums of whose collections they are a part.

Art speaks to each of the ages in a single human life, and to the life of humanity across time. The artworks chosen here come from many cultures and span five centuries, and the collection is designed to be a family treasure, to be shared across generations, over time. (JMJ)