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# What's New in Children's Books: Sizzling Summer Reading

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## ON THE HORIZON



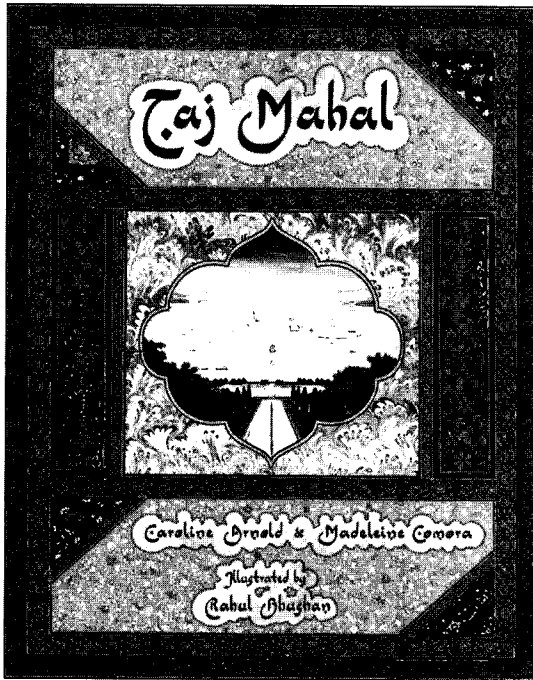
### WHAT'S NEW IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

#### Sizzling Summer Reading

Barbara A. Ward & Terrell A. Young  
Washington State University

It's almost summer time, and the living seems so much easier than it does during the rest of the year. The pace changes, and so do our reading tastes. Summer is the time for refueling our engines, reaching for inspiration, and exploring the splendor of the wide world around us. In this column we offer a collection of books that seem perfectly suited to summer's schedule of traveling, spending time with family and friends, and honing our talents. While you're throwing another charcoal briquette on the barbecue, why not serve up some sizzling summer reads along with a side of salad?

*Taj Mahal*, Caroline Arnold and Madeleine Comora, Ill. Rahal Bhaghan



*Although young readers will recognize the beautiful white marble structure on the book's cover, few will know the love story behind its creation. When a young beauty catches the eye of the man who will rule the Mughal empire, the young prince is determined to spend the rest of his life with the charming young woman. Devastated after her death in childbirth, he puts his energy and creativity into the construction of a monument to their love. Sadly, the black marble tomb he envisioned for himself to mirror his wife's white tomb was never erected. This stunning book is filled with illustrations and engraved borders based on ones found in manuscripts written centuries ago.*

Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Books, 32 pages, \$17.95, ISBN 076132609-X, grades 4-7.

***An Egg Is Quiet***, Dianna Aston. Ill. Sylvia Long

*Aston's evocative, lyrical text dances with Long's beautiful illustrations in this introduction of the incredible variety of eggs—60 in all. From tiny hummingbird eggs and gooey frog eggs to fossilized dinosaur eggs, children learn about the attributes of eggs and many incredible egg facts. Every turn of the page illustrates the beauty and wisdom found in nature. Children love to match the eggs on the front pages with the creatures on the back.*

San Francisco: Chronicle Books, unpagged, \$16.95, ISBN 978-0-8118-4428-4, grades PK-2.

***Vive La Paris***, Esmé Raji Codell

*Codell weaves together a beautiful tapestry of stories in this companion book to her popular Sahara Special (Hyperion, 2003). This tapestry features Paris McCray, a bright fifth-grader who lives in inner city Chicago. The woof and warp of the book are her musically inclined family—loving parents who are committed to their Christian faith and the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. Her four brothers always look out for her and protect her. The tapestry contains threads of friendship in Luz and Sahara and their Extreme Readers Club. Another story thread concerns a bully who regularly beats up her favorite brother and her concern for why he does not defend himself. A final story thread involves Paris's elderly piano teacher, Mrs. Rosen, who lived in Nazi occupied France. Paris tries to use her own life's context to understand Mrs. Rosen's experiences.*

New York: Hyperion, 210 pages, \$15.99, ISBN 0-7868-5124-4, grades 4-6.

***Julia's Kitchen***, Brenda A. Ferber

*Eleven-year-old Cara Segal's life suddenly changes in a dramatic fashion. While Cara was spending the night with her best friend, Cara's mother and younger sister die as their home catches fire. Only her father survived. As Cara moves through the stages of grief she has many questions. Why did her father survive when the others died? How could God allow this to happen? When will her devastated father be ready to talk about what happened? Why was Cara spared? Eventually Cara*

*draws strength from the cooking activities she and her mother enjoyed together.*

New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 151 pages, \$16.00, ISBN 0-374-39932-8, grades 4-7.

***Owen & Mzee: The true story of a remarkable friendship***, Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff, & Paula Kahumbu

*Children are intrigued by this unlikely but true story of Owen, a baby hippo that is separated from his mother by the devastating tsunami and then befriended by a 130-year-old giant tortoise, Mzee. Engaging color photos document Owen's rescue and eventual friendship with the tortoise. Kids may want to pair this book with Jeanette Winter's *Mama* (Harcourt, 2006), a simple illustrated book on the same topic. Note that the authors have published a second book, *Owen & Mzee: The Language of Friendship* (Scholastic, 2007).*

Scholastic, unpagged, \$16.99, ISBN 0-439-82973-9, grades PK-3.

***Writing magic. Creating stories that fly***, Gail Carson Levine

*The well-loved author offers practical tips for how to write fiction and suggests that budding authors save whatever they write. Young writers can spend the summer days honing their writing skills by practicing Levine's exercises and reading the powerful writing samples she provides, drawn from both from her own books and those of others. Readers will learn how to write great beginnings and endings, pay attention to detail, and develop characters so unforgettable that they remain in the reader's mind long after the book has been closed.*

HarperCollins, 168 pages, \$16.99, ISBN 13-978-0-06-051961-2, grades 4-7.

***Wings***, William Loizeaux. Ill. Leslie Bowman

*Change is in the wind in 1960 for ten-year-old Nick who lives with his widowed mother in a small town. Nick must learn to accept his mother's budding friendship with the local handyman, understand his father's death during the Korean War, and deal with the class bully. When he rescues a tiny mockingbird, Nick lavishes all sorts of affection on the bird who teaches him to laugh, to love, and to let her go when the time*

*comes. His treatment of the bird is respectful and affectionate and bodes well for the man he will become one day. The delicate pencil drawings of mockingbirds help the reader appreciate the bond between Nick and Marcy, his bird.*

New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 144 pages, \$16.00, 0374348022, grades 3-6.

***Porch lies: Tales of slicksters, tricksters, and other wily characters,***  
Patricia C. McKissack, Ill. Andre Carrilho

*Summer time seems the perfect time to sit on the front porch while listening to and telling stories, and this collection of nine stories has a comfortable feel to it. With roots in the African-American oral tradition, the stories feel grounded in myth, legends and history as much as in the author's own imagination. Sometimes, it's hard to distinguish between the trickster and the ones being tricked, and the reader is sure to recognize more than one acquaintance or family member in the tales. These tales, which beg to be read aloud, seem fresh and yet, somehow familiar, amusing at one turn, and frightening at another. This charming collection is further distinguished by the author's attention to detail, use of authentic vocabulary and memorable names. These well-crafted stories are certain to inspire readers to tell a porch lie or two of their own.*

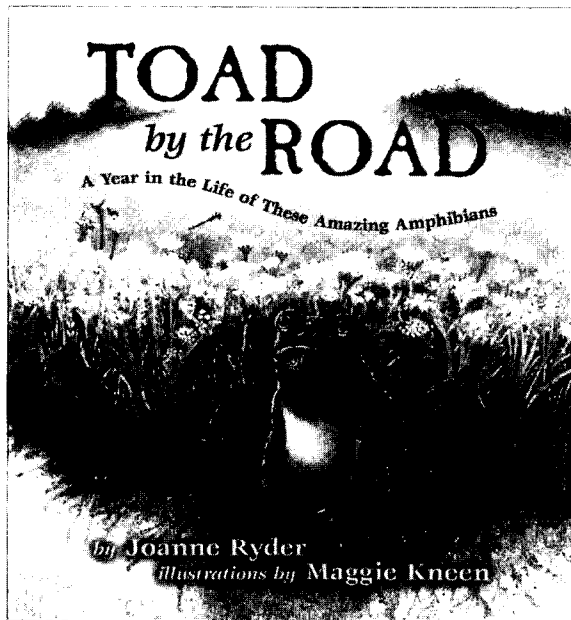
New York: Schwartz & Wade/ Random House, 146 pages, \$18.95, ISBN 0-375-83619-5, grades 4-8.

***Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea,*** Sy Montgomery, Photographs by Nic Bishop

*A team of scientists and local explorers heads into what seems like paradise in New Guinea to track the Matschie's tree kangaroo, a species that make their home in the isolated cloud forests. Filled with luscious photographs and gripping text, this engaging eco-adventure takes the reader deep into the day to day lives of scientists as they work in the field, respecting both the animals' habitat and the needs of the citizens who live nearby.*

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 80 pages, \$18.00, ISBN 978-0618-49641-9, grades 5-9.

*Toad by the Road: A Year in the Life of these Amazing Amphibians*,  
Joanne Ryder, Ill. Maggie Kneen



*This toad-ally delightful collection of poems dedicated to toads is a hymn of praise to their usefulness and uniqueness. Blending beautifully-phrased poems with scientific information on toads at the bottom of each page, the author focuses on a humble creature often overlooked by others. Although the book follows a year in the life of the toad, summer time is the perfect time to hop along with this amphibian. The soft watercolors give readers a glimpse into the active lives of toads, and are bound to inspire readers to spend summer days watching and appreciating them.*

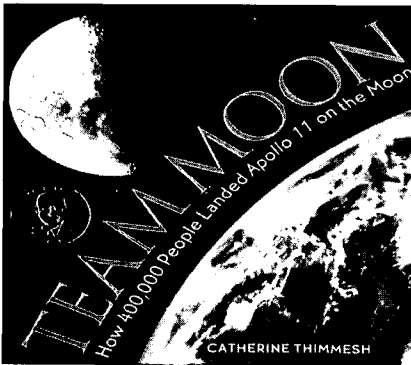
New York: Henry Holt and Company, 40 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 080507354X, grades 2-5.

*Ryan and Jimmy and the Well in Africa That Brought them Together*, Herb Shoveller

*When Canadian first grader Ryan Hreljac learns that not everyone in the world has access to life-giving water, and that it costs only \$70 to build a well in Africa, he decides to raise the money for a well. Ryan remains undaunted when he realizes that the money he raised by doing chores is only enough to pay for a hand pump for one well. The resolve of this determined young man catches the attention of others, including businesses and the media, and they offer financial support. When he travels to Africa to see his well, Ryan meets Jimmy, a young boy who wants to thank him for the gift of clean, accessible water, and a powerful bond forms between the boys. Over the years, Ryan's dream of making a difference has inspired others so much that there is now a Ryan's Well Foundation, and that first well in Uganda has grown to more than 194 wells, bearing vivid testimony to the life-changing power of one individual.*

Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press, 56 pages. \$16.95. 978-1-55337-967-6, grades 3-7.

***Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon,*** Catherine Thimmesh, Ill. with photographs



*Team Moon is more than the story of the three astronauts, Buzz Aldrin, Neil Armstrong, and Michael Collins, who flew to the moon, landed, walked on its surface, and came back. It is the story of all those men and women—all 400,000 of them!—whose unheralded work made the first lunar landing possible. The behind the scene stories are told in the voices of the men and women responsible for the mission's success—engineers, seamstresses, flight directors, managers, camera designers,*



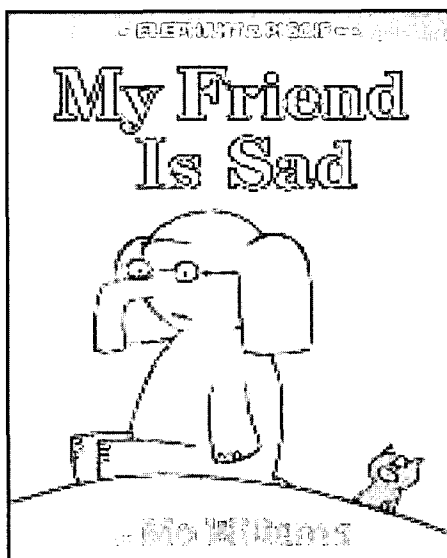
software experts, suit testers, telescope crew, newscasters, and navigators. Thimmesh's riveting text transports readers to the time and place of the great event as if they were observing the astronauts on this historic venture as the scientists on the ground worked together to solve problems to bring the Apollo and its crew safely home.

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 80 pages, \$19.95, ISBN 0-618-50757-4, grades 4-8.

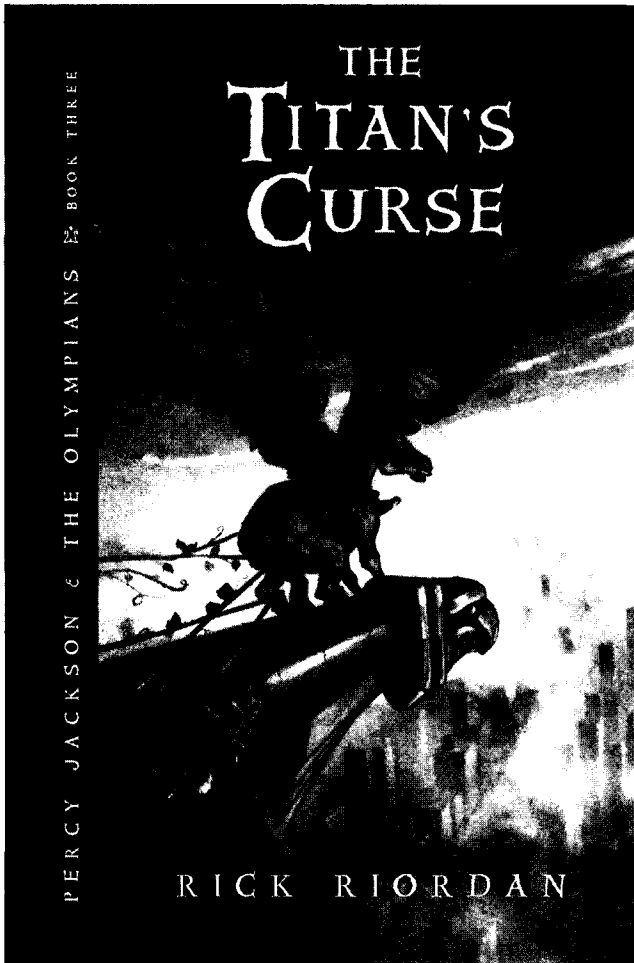
***My Friend Is Sad and Today I Will Fly!***, M. Willems

Mo Willems' new series, *Elephant & Piggie Books*, provide brand new readers with confidence as they encounter clever stories in simple text. They meet Gerald, the cautious worrier of an elephant, and the overly-confident Piggie. As parents listen to their children read *Today I Will Fly!*, they will notice that Willems' brief text has *Suesslike* qualities as Gerald declares, "You will not fly today. You will not fly tomorrow. You will not fly next week!" In the second book, kids enjoy Piggie's attempts to cheer up Gerald in *My Friend Is Sad*. Beginning readers will beg for more *Elephant and Piggie Books* (and their parents will understand why these books are *New York Times* best-sellers!).

New York: Hyperion, 64 pages, \$8.99, ISBN: 1-4321-0297-5 and 1-4321-0295-9, grades K-1.



*The Titan's Curse*, Rick Riordan



*Many Harry Potter fans quickly become Percy Jackson fans. In *The Lightning Thief* (Hyperion, 2005), Percy learns that the ancient Greek gods are alive and living in the United States. Moreover, he learns that his father is Poseidon, making him a demigod. Percy goes to Camp Half-*

*Blood where he meets other demigods and is given a quest to find Zeus's stolen lightning bolt. Percy's adventures in *The Sea of Monsters* (Hyperion, 2006) take him to the Bermuda Triangle where he fights Cyclops Polyphemus, and to retrieve the healing Golden Fleece which is needed to protect Camp Half-Blood. *The Titan's Curse* deals with a horrible ancient monster that poses a threat to all of the gods. The goddess Artemis seeks to capture it but she disappears, leaving Percy and his friends only one week to find her and to solve the challenge of the curse.*

New York: Mirimax/Hyperion, 320 pages, \$17.95, ISBN: 1-4231-0145-6, grades 5-8.