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## Children's literature: What's on the horizons

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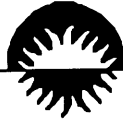
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## **Children's literature: What's on the horizons**

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### CHAPTER BOOKS

Bierhorst, John (Ed.). 1998. *The Deetkatoo: Native American stories about little people*. Illustrated by Ron H. Coy. NY: Morrow Junior books. ISBN: 0-688-14837-9. 160 pp.

This book is a fascinating collection of twenty-two folktales that involve the little people. The little people provide a charming thread that runs through the folklore of a variety of Native American cultures such as Mohawk, Suni, Cherokee, Maya, Inuit, Seneca, Passamaquoddy. The little people share their power and wise ways with deserving "big" people. They also entertain themselves by tricking the "big" people. The black and white illustrations by Native American artist Ron Coy complement the focus of each tale. At the end, Bierhorst includes a list of references for further reading.

Dygaard, Thomas J. (1998). *River danger*. NY: Morrow Junior Books. ISBN: 0-688-14852-2. 176 pp.

Eighteen-year-old Eric and his eleven-year-old brother Robbie set off on a fifty-mile canoe trip that will take five or six days. They do not have a close relationship and would not be together except that their father broke his ankle and Eric, after a fair amount of cajoling, agrees to take his father's place. On the way to the river, the two boys come across Wilmer, Jerry, Lucas and Dorothy (Jerry's wife) whose behaviors make the boys suspicious. On their first night of camping, Robbie insists that he and his brother develop a secret code for communicating in case of danger. Eric thinks it's silly but indulges his little brother. As it turns out, the secret code becomes a critical factor as the boys find themselves

separated and embroiled with the four adults who turn out to be part of a stolen car ring. This is a fast paced, well told adventure/suspense story. The characterization is developed largely through the dialogue and the relationship between the two brothers grows along with the reader's knowledge of who these two boys are.

Porte, Barbara A. (1998). *Hearsay: Strange tales from the Middle Kingdom*. Illustrated by Rosemary F. Covey, NY: Greenwillow Books. ISBN: 0-688-15381-X. 144 pp.

Based on Chinese history, legend and myth, the fifteen tales included in this volume have been retold or created by the author. Through her intense interest and study of the Middle Kingdom (the Chinese name for China) Porte has included in this collection intriguing, gripping, and often, daring tales of magic, dynasty, tradition and family. At the end are notes for each story which offer the reader additional information. This is a wonderful book for students intrigued by storytelling who like to read and tell stories of their own. The black and white block illustrations which begin each story offer an effective introduction.

Siebold, Jan. (1998). *Rope burn*. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co. ISBN: 0-8075-7109-1. 82 pp.

Writing assignments based on proverbs lead Richard to think about and then truly deal with his parents' divorce. Mr. Best is the English teacher at Richard's new school and facilitates along with Richard's friend James, Richard's working through his feelings of anger and alienation. The book consists of nine pieces of writing based on such proverbs as "One good turn deserves another" or "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Siebold has created a unique way of pulling this story together and along with the first person voice has provided a powerful tool for sharing the concerns and feelings of this sixth grader.

Stevenson, James. (1998). *Mud Flat April fool*. NY: Greenwillow Books. ISBN: 0-688-15163-9. 48 pp.

This is an illustrated chapter book for young readers. It is April 1<sup>st</sup> and all the animals in Mud Flat are trying April Fools tricks on each other. In each of the ten short chapters, the planning and result of a different trick are narrated. This is a playful and fun story that children

will thoroughly enjoy and be able to share in with experiences of their own.

#### PICTURE BOOKS

Hesse, Karen. (1999). *Come on, Rain*. Illustrated by Jon J. Muth. NY: Scholastic. ISBN: 0-590-33125-6. 32 pp.

In this book, Tessie and her family and friends are all waiting for the rain to come. They urge it to come, talk about it coming, pray for it to come. While Tessie and her family are African American, the other characters in the story are of a variety of ethnicities. The water color illustrations complement both the tone of the story and the mood of the weather. This picture book makes a wonderful companion to *Out of the Dust* also by Karen Hesse.

Hobbs, Will. (1998). *Howling hill*. Illustrated by Jill Kastner. NY: Morrow Junior Books. ISBN: 0-688-15429-8. 40 pp.

This is the story of Hanni the wolf pup who is swept down the Nahanni River on a log that she and her siblings have been playing on. She is alone and frightened and risks swimming to shore. There, she finds a cave and a bear beginning his winter hibernation. The bear is not quite sleepy yet, so he helps her find her way home which he recognizes from the smell on her coat. It is the smell of the hot, stinky water which bubbles out of the ground on Howling Hill. This is a warm story about growing up and gaining independence and, in Hanni's specific case, learning to howl. The lush oil paintings capture Hanni's feelings as she moves through the story.

Pyle, Howard. (1998). *King stork*. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. NY: Morrow Junior Books. ISBN: 0-688-15813-7. 48 pp.

A reissue in hardcover of a fairytale initially published in 1973, *King Stork* is a captivating story. The illustrations add to the magical, lyrical qualities as well as to the charm of the drummer, the main character. The story is of a drummer who, on his way home from the wars, carries an old man across a river. He comes to find out that the old man is really King Stork who has been bewitched and is now free of the spell due to the kindness of the drummer. Because of this good deed, the drummer is able to accomplish the seemingly impossible deeds

demanded of all who would marry the princess and win her hand. The princess is a wicked witch and has succeeded in having all of her other suitors beheaded. This is a highly readable tale that children of all ages will enjoy.

San Souci, Robert D. (1998). *Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella*. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney. NY: Simon & Schuster Books. ISBN: 0-689-80668-X. 40 pp.

In this Cinderella variant, the narrator is Cendrillon's godmother, a poor blanchisseuse (washerwoman) who has only one thing of value in the world — a magic wand left to her by her mother. The narrator works for Cendrillon's family and when Cendrillon's mother dies, she makes the washerwoman Cendrillon's nannin' (godmother). San Souci uses Creole words throughout the text and includes a glossary at the end of the book. The scratchboard illustrations fix the story in a Caribbean atmosphere filled with light and color. This variant will entertain and intrigue readers of all ages.

Turner, Ann. (1998). *Drummer boy: Marching to the Civil War*. Illustrated by Mark Hess. NY: HarperCollins. ISBN: 0-06-027696-7. 32 pp.

The story is narrated by the thirteen-year-old drummer boy who is the youngest in his family and serves only as the "crow boy" on the farm. He hears Mr. Lincoln speak and along with his disgust and anger at the idea of slavery, decides to run away and enlist. Through sharing his experiences in battle, he highlights the fear and anguish of war. An historical note at the end tells of the importance of the drummer boys in the Civil War. The paintings add to the realism of the narrative. Though sparsely told, the story shares movingly but not sentimentally the horror of a mere boy seeing and doing the things that war demands.