

4-1-1991

Professional Materials

Lynn Nations Johnson
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Johnson, L. N. (1991). Professional Materials. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 31 (4). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol31/iss4/8

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Reviews

Professional Materials

Literature-Based Social Studies: Children's Books and Activities to Enrich the K-5 Curriculum. Written by Mildred Knight Laughlin and Patricia Payne Kardaleff. Oryx Press, 4041 North Central at Indian School Road, Phoenix AZ 85012-3397. ISBN: 0-89774-605-8. 148 pp. US\$27.50 1991.

Reviewed by Lynn Nations Johnson
Western Michigan University

Laughlin and Kardaleff have designed sets of integrated social studies/literature lessons with accompanying related children's literature and follow-up activities. With each lesson they have provided some bibliographic information for additional research and study by the children. The lessons cover a broad range of topics within the traditional "expanding social studies curriculum" format: self, family, community, etc. However, in the midst of the traditional approach, attention to multicultural issues is woven. The set of lessons on families illustrates this multicultural weaving. The study of family is one of the traditional K-5 social studies topics. Rather than presenting a single type of family configuration, Laughlin and Kardaleff have the children explore and discuss multiple family configurations relevant to today's society. Examples include two-parent families with children, single-parent families with children, and families with extended family residing in the same household. A lesson follows wherein the definition of home and its function are explored, followed by one on the economics of family living and a child's potential contribution. The closing lesson for this set examines family configurations, lifestyles, and

traditions in diverse cultural settings such as Nicaragua, South Africa, Kenya, Japan. In addition to the multicultural elements found in the study of families, later lessons either focus on or present related literature and activities which explore Appalachian, Native American, and Black American cultures, to name a few, as well as diverse world cultures.

Laughlin and Kardaleff's book would serve a teacher in productive ways as a resource book. It is *not* designed as a textbook, but rather is designed to supplement social studies programs and to inspire the creation of programs where none exist. It offers a beginning step to integrated social studies/literature units, but is not a book to be used as a sole source. A number of high quality pieces of contemporary children's literature are introduced; this is a rich resource.

While recognizing the positive attributes of this book, it is important to recognize it as a resource with limitations as well. Although the multicultural component is consistent throughout, sparse attention is given to the reality of the human condition, e.g., the plight of the poor and the working class; ethnic/racial, class, and gender discrimination. Educating children to have a *full* understanding of humanity, *all* we experience, and *why*, is an integral part of multicultural education.

In short, the book reflects a white, middle-class orientation to life and to diversity, the very orientation multicultural education seeks to overcome. Laughlin and Kardaleff do take social studies and children's literature one step closer to the integration of their content and purposes, and they take these two disciplines several steps closer to their integration with multicultural content. The reality is we still have a long, long way to go and many more steps remain to be taken.



Books for Children

Aldo Peanut Butter. Written by Johanna Hurwitz. Illustrated by Diane de Groat. Morrow Junior Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN 0-688-09751-0. 128 pp. US\$12.95.

Reviewed by Sherry R. Myers
Western Michigan University

When Aldo asks for a puppy for his birthday, he gets more than anyone bargained for: he gets five of them! His parents allow him to keep two, which he names Peanut and Butter. Summer vacation has just begun when Aldo's parents are called away on separate emergencies. Suddenly, Aldo and his two older sisters, Elaine and Karen, are in charge of the house. *Aldo Peanut Butter* is the chronicle of their week's adventures on their own, which include green hair, a lobster race across the kitchen floor, and a puppy covered in syrup. When the children learn that their parents are coming home – and bringing their grandparents to live with them (which may mean getting rid of one of the puppies) – the action becomes fast and furious as Aldo works to save the day... and his puppies.

The adventures are of realistic siblings who love each other and work together, but don't always agree. Aldo's decisions as he tries to train his puppies and bring order back to the house are ones that children can easily picture for themselves. That is the joy of *Aldo Peanut Butter*. Aldo cares about his family and all living things; he is bright, inquisitive, and brave, but he is never portrayed as a miniature adult. Because of this, the reader will love Aldo and will gladly join with him in his adventures.

Hurwitz's text is manageable for readers who are ready for chapter books. Diane de Groat's detailed black and white illustrations add dimension to the characters and scenes. For children not quite ready to attempt the reading, *Aldo Peanut Butter* is a treat to listen to, and the chapters are short enough to make good bedtime reading or listening.



Alison's Zinnia. Anita Lobel, author and illustrator. Greenwillow Books, a division of William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN 0-688-08866-X. Hardcover, 32 pp. US\$14.95. 1991.

Reviewed by Linda K. Judy
Western Michigan University

Alison's Zinnia is an extraordinarily clever alphabet book for all ages. In keeping with alphabet book tradition, each letter represents an object; in this case, the theme is flowers. However, Lobel's unique approach is many layered. The author/illustrator succeeds in finding a way to connect flowers to girls' names: "Once I found the verbs, it all seemed wickedly simple. Girl-verb-flower, linking fluidly and gracefully from page to page and connecting the last action in the book back to the beginning."

*Alison acquired an Amaryllis for Beryl.
Beryl bought a Begonia for Crystal.
Crystal cut a Chrysanthemum for Dawn.*

...

*Xantippe x-ed a Xanthium for Yolanda.
Yolanda yanked a Yucca for Zena.
Zena zeroed in on a Zinnia for Alison.*

The fact that the primary illustrations of each flower are botanically correct provides the possibility of integration with a science curriculum. Lobel's choice of verbs provides a stimulating vocabulary challenge to her readers on many levels. Her secondary illustrations visually describe the action of the verb to make each sentence have meaning to even the very youngest of readers. Lobel's vivid use of color, painterly style and strong page layout, along with her creative use of alliteration and "girl-verb-flower" connections combine to produce a uniquely stimulating and universally appealing alphabet book which flows easily from one page to the next.

Building a House. Written by Byron Barton. Greenwillow Books, a division of William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. 31 pp. ISBN 0-688-09356-6. US\$4.95. 1990.

Reviewed by Cindy Overly
Western Michigan University

Building A House offers an opportunity for curious onlookers to observe the sequence of tradesmen involved in constructing a new home from the groundbreaking all the way to moving day. Because the text is simple, and the illustrations are bright and charming in their childlike style, *Building a House* is ideal for beginning readers.

This story will spark interest when shared at home or in the classroom, since children and adults all seem to be fascinated by buildings under construction. This behind-the-scenes glimpse of the workers also provides an opportunity for youngsters to learn some basic information about careers related to the construction business.

Elfwyn's Saga. Story and pictures by David Wisniewski. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09589-5. US\$13.95. 1990.

Just as skillful writing may inspire children to write in a new style, so dramatic illustrations may inspire children to attempt a new art form. David Wisniewski is both author and illustrator of this handsome book, and the cut paper panoramas are amazingly vivid and varied.

There are deep and important truths in myths, and children have no difficulty in making their way through make-believe worlds; adults do children no favors by stressing the "truth" of fantasies. The ending of this story turns the tale into a lovely pourquoi story — a "why" story explaining the origins of a natural phenomenon — with the sparkling dust fragments of the shattered crystal glimmering in the northern sky as the Northern

Lights. But to introduce this beautiful ending with the assertion, "When you meet the Hidden Folk in a dream, they will tell you this tale is true" seems unnecessary and unwise. (JMJ)

Manatee on Location. Written by Kathy Darling. Photographs by Tara Darling. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09030-3. 48 pp. \$14.95. 1991.

Fact-packed and illustrated with handsome photographs (and, in the chapter on "Manatee Anatomy," with clear, simple diagrams), the text is as exciting as it is informative – one of many instances of an upsurge in content area trade books as tempting to read as good fiction. Two chapters are in the form of dated diary entries about manatee observations: Chapter 1, "Water Baby," describes the birth of a manatee calf; Chapter 7, "Drownproof," vividly recounts the injuries to a manatee inflicted by a motor boat. The authors encourage a commitment to wildlife preservation. (JMJ)

Summer Time Tales

Yellow Ball. Written by Molly Bang. Morrow Junior Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-06314-4. 24 pp. US\$12.95. 1991.

By The Sea. Written by Michelle Koch. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09549-6. 24 pp. US\$13.95. 1991.

The Twelve Days of Summer. Written by Elizabeth L. O'Donnell. Illustrated by Karen Lee Schmidt. Morrow Junior Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-08202-5. 32 pp. US\$13.95. 1991.

In good time for preparation for vacation reading, here are three gorgeous, multifaceted storybooks with on-the-beach settings. The protagonist of *Yellow Ball* is a beachball. "Catch Throw Uh-oh" — and the big yellow ball is off on a dramatic

trip through the wind and waves, finally to reach the only proper new home for a lost toy — the arms of a welcoming child. Bang's lovely illustrations show the wide human family enjoying the beach together. Every part of the the book is charming, including her thanks to a third grade class "for helping me to learn to draw BIG."

By the Sea also presents a simple text and ingenious illustrations which show a diversity of people. Michelle Koch has chosen to contrast paired words through text and illustrations: *search* (the seagulls are dashing about the beach, heads down) and *find* (three birds in a row have each caught a fish). This picture book will inspire conversation and storytelling, and will be enjoyed by preschoolers and primary age children alike.

Summer at the seaside is celebrated in *The Twelve Days of Summer*. The text can be read, or sung — "three jellyfish, two pelicans, and a little purple sea anemone" — and the illustrations are enchanting. A wonderful family book to enjoy on the way to a joyous outing. (JMJ)



Materials reviewed are not endorsed by *Reading Horizons* or Western Michigan University. The content of the reviews reflects the opinion of the reviewers whose names or initials appear with the reviews.

To submit an item for potential review, send to Kathryn A. Welsch, Reviews Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008.