Early Childhood

BERRY, Cate. Penguin & Tiny Shrimp Don’t Do Bedtime! illus. by Charles Santoso. 32p. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. May 2018. Tr $17.99. ISBN 9780062491534. PreS-Gr 1–This may look like a bedtime book but it’s not, and Penguin and Tiny Shrimp want readers to know this from the start. They might be dressed in pajamas, have just brushed their teeth, and may even be bouncing on a squishy cozy bed but they have no interest in sleep. They don’t have time for sheep or stars, they want to run and jump and play; their eyelids are heavy but they still want to tell jokes and have a party. In the end they fall asleep, just as kids might guess, in that big cozy bed. Considering the sea of bedtime books in existence, the plot and the text doesn’t stand out all that much. The digital illustrations resemble colored pencil and are the highlight of the book. VERDICT An additional purchase for large libraries or those looking to add to their sleepytme collections.—Shana Shea, Windsor Public Library, CT

DEWDNEY, Anna & Reed Duncan. Llama Llama Loves To Read. illus. by J.T. Morrow. 40p. Viking. May 2018. Tr $17.99. ISBN 9780670013975. POP PreS-Gr 1–The most discerning “Llama Llama” fans will approve of this brand-new story from the combined efforts of Duncan, Dewdney’s longtime partner, and Morrow, a master in illustration style mimicry. The story follows Llama Llama to a setting readers will be familiar with, and builds on his previous experiences with classmates, like Nelly Gnu, and his teacher, Zelda Zebra. Duncan cleverly inserts many fundamentals of phonics and sight words using Dewdney’s signature rhyming style, making this perfect for children who have outgrown Llama’s preschool drama and are learning to read themselves. Early literacy advocates will adore this aspect, and public librarians will likely seize every opportunity to incorporate it into parent education programs. Like the other books, the familiarity of Llama Llama’s situations and life lessons are comforting and encouraging without being patronizing or tedious. The narrative respects the innate creativity in children and is the perfect launching point for inspiring new readers to go out and experience the wonderful world of the written word for themselves. VERDICT Dewdney devotees and book lovers everywhere will approve and hope to see more from this duo and the Anna E. Dewdney Literary Trust.—Jenna Boles, Greene County Public Library, Beavercreek, OH

ENGEL, Christiane. ABC for Me: ABC Mindful Me. illus. by Christiane Engel. 36p. Walter Foster Jr. May 2018. Board $16.95. ISBN 9781633225107. PreS-Gr 1–Using an ABC format, this title introduces readers/listeners to a different word on each page related to mindfulness and a short description of what it means. Pictures are large and help provide clues to unfamiliar words. For example, A is for Awareness, the text says, “Pay attention to your world. It’s full of surprises. Beautiful things in all shapes and sizes!” The illustration shows a young child and her mom sitting on a blanket that overlooks a river and mountain range. They are looking up at birds and butterflies. Although a board book format, this title would work well with early elementary school children because some of the concepts are more complex and there are also activities included. For example, children are encouraged to collect rocks and paint faces on them to create “Emotion Rocks.” “Whenever it’s hard to talk about your feelings...” The illustration shows a young child and her mom sitting on a blanket that overlooks a river and mountain range. They are looking up at birds and butterflies. Although a board book format, this title would work well with early elementary school children because some of the concepts are more complex and there are also activities included. For example, children are encouraged to collect rocks and paint faces on them to create “Emotion Rocks.” “Whenever it’s hard to talk about your feelings...”
for Minerva) do become friends, but Ben is nervous when he is invited over to Erv's house, where the dog, Max, would be off a leash. When Ben learns that Max is uneasy about his new abode (and afraid of the shiny floors of the playroom), Ben nearly forgets about his fear, and in a triumphant turn of events, the scaredy-dog and dog-fearing boy become brave allies and buddies. Emphasized in thick, crayonlike outlines, the soft, cartoon illustrations add comfort and charm to this encouraging, gentle narrative about a common childhood fear. VERDICT This compassionate story may ease some anxiety in young children who are nervous or fearful around dogs. A warmhearted addition to Ellis and LaFave's books about Ben.—Brianne Colombo, Fairfield Free Public Library, NJ


PreS-Gr 3—A wizard of wordplay and a maelstrom of composition combine their considerable talents to explore the notion of home. With a stylized nod to e.e. cummings and just enough rhyme to propel the pace and please the ear, Fogliano tracks siblings as they approach and enter an abandoned house. Her lines about the dwelling are a study in contrasts. Once it was, but now it isn’t a home. The boy and girl notice: “A door that is closed but not quite. A door that is stuck between coming and going. A door that was once painted white.” As the children peruse books and objects, they extrapolate conclusions about the owners. Perhaps the man was a sea captain, the woman—a painter. Smith’s complex, layered illustrations first depict an impressionistic forest world, rich with a bouquet of deep, dappled colors. (A note on process adds appreciation.) Lighter wildflowers grace the foreground, and a bluebird—a character to watch—transport a worm. Inside the house, it’s as if the pages have been bleached; sunlight streaming through roof holes renders possessions transparent. Collage elements, such as a mouse poking through a portrait, add humor. As the imagined inhabitants assume center stage, the oil paintings take on more solidity and definition. While the story begins, the oil paintings take more solidity and definition. While the story begins, the oil paintings take


PreS-Gr 2—This is a story about a young boy who matches to the beat of his own drum, though he occasionally does feel lonely. Set in the city, the boy dresses in jeans, T-shirts, and a leather jacket and boots, with hair cut in a mohawk. He loves to play the drums and listen to punk music. He hears the sounds of the city and feels the energy of its pulse. This is displayed through the use of bold black text on a bright, ripped-paper banner over digitally modified black-and-white photographs. The stark contrast in colors on each page could represent the intense feelings of the protagonist enjoying his independence and interests while still feeling isolated. Gorman has penned an exceedingly relatable book and most readers will connect with the protagonist’s dilemma, regardless of their music tastes. There is a happy ending when the child finds other kids to form a band with. VERDICT A must-have wherever music, especially punk rock, is popular.—Amy Shepherd, St. Anne’s Episcopal School, Middleton, DE


K-Gr 3—The hunt for a perfect spot for a tree house starts appropriately from the ground up. The illustrations in this book do not disappoint—beginning with a sweeping image that urges readers to imagine a “home of timber and rafters in wangled, gnarled bark.” Kids will love climbing upward to the canopy with each turn of the page, where they will discover a feast of details. Included are images of airy spaces designed for plants or books, ladders or lifts for those who use wheelchairs, places to sleep amid branches, and the “fuzziest kind” of socks and a sleeping bag without holes. With a view of the stars and a wish for “secrets and whispers,” this book urges adventure and creativity with digitally enhanced figures created with graphite and softly colored and highly detailed sweeping vistas—and the accompanying prose to encourage thoughtfulness in young poets. VERDICT A suggested first purchase for young and old readers alike.—Mary Estam, Learning Media Services, Plano ISD, TX


Gr 2–4—It’s 1945, and World War II is over. After many long nights huddled in bed with her mother during the London Blitz, Ruby and her neighbors celebrate victory and the impending return of many fathers. Ruby has to wait a long time, but finally her dad comes home, changing everything. Ruby’s house feels crowded and she doesn’t know how to act with this “big sunburned man.” Ruby’s relationship with her father remains distant until the day she falls playing on bomb rubble. Her father picks her up, carries her home, and isn’t a bit mad. Ruby is so overjoyed that she hugs him and cries, “I’m so glad you’re back!” With a classic, retro-look to it, this historical picture book is geared toward younger elementary schoolers. The straightforward third-person narrative is brief and printed in an easy to read font, although changes in time and place
