human body. Youngsters will enjoy the failed attempts of using walnuts, swords, rowboats, goats, and even pickles to measure distance. The exaggerated, colorful cartoon illustrations are humorous and appealing. Fans of the author's other math concept books will be delighted with this offering, too.—Debbie Lewis, Alachua County Library District, FL


PreS—Presented for the first time as a full-length picture book, Hughes’s lyrical poem comes to life through Qualls’s lush collage-style illustration. The poem, originally part of The Dream Keeper and Other Poems (Knopf, 1932), celebrates the love between a mother and her child and the quiet rituals of putting a baby to bed. The art, in muted tones of purple and blue, provides a dreamlike backdrop to the touching words. At the end of the book, the lullaby is printed on one page so that readers can see it in its original format, thereby changing the reading experience slightly. A “Note About the Poet” gives context for the poem and a brief insight into Hughes’s life and inspirations (including a discussion of how this particular poem might have been born of loneliness, thereby giving it a more melancholy and poignant subtext). A wonderful celebration of both love and poetry.—Rita Meade, Brooklyn Public Library, NY


Gr 2-5—This picture-book biography concentrates on Alcott’s service as a Civil War nurse. The journey from her home in Massachusetts to a hospital in Washington, DC, was difficult and eye-opening. Arriving to harsh conditions and a constant stream of wounded soldiers, Alcott dealt with her situation by writing about it. Explaining how the experience shaped her sensibilities and led to the publication of her first successful book, Hospital Sketches, Krull makes the case that Little Women may not have happened without her subject’s Civil War involvement. Digital oils on gessoed canvas were used to create the images. Alcott appears slightly idealized, attractive but not beautiful. The war-time palette is somber and dark, but the protagonist is often wearing something with a red or white accent to make her stand out. Her figure consistently commands the eye. In the last few pictures, when the war has ended and Alcott has achieved success, the colors are much brighter and convey a more cheerful mood.

To help readers understand the larger context of the time, notes about women in 19th-century medicine and the Battle of Fredericksburg are included. This portrait is brief but compelling, and it may inspire readers to seek out more information about a groundbreaking author.—Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher’s School, Richmond, VA.


K-Gr 2—Yasha was rescued by scientists after hunters killed his mother and is being raised in the Dunsmiskoe Game Preserve in Russia to remain a wild creature. Full-page, full-color photographs show the distinctive white fur and black nose, long tongue, and claws of the young bear. Two other orphaned cubs were taken to live with Yasha, and they bond to form a “family” that lasts beyond their winter hibernation. Only slightly marred by some fictionalizing, e.g., Yasha cried and felt happy and proud after he escaped from a tiger by scrambling up a tree, this is a lovely introduction to Asian black bears. The book doesn’t have as much factual information as Brenda Z. Cubberston’s Moon Bear (Holt, 2010), but it includes an informative range map, a fact list (weighing less than a pound when born, an adult moon bear can weigh more than 400 pounds), a one-page project description, and a list of zoos and sanctuaries where one can see moon bears. This warm accounting of a lifesaving partnership between animals and humans will be a popular addition for browsing.—Frenz E. Millhouse, formerly at Chantilly Regional Library, Fairfax County, VA


Gr 1-4—In this abbreviated version of the cautionary tale, readers are introduced to Don Quijote’s imagination and adventures. An avid reader, he convinces himself that the characters in his books are real. He imagines himself as a knight, a girl in a nearby village as his lady, his old horse as a steed, and his uneducated neighbor as his squire and errant. In a series of slapstick incidents, he fights a windmill, a flock of sheep, some winewines, and a tired lion. When Don Quijote’s relatives worry about his long absence, they send a student out in disguise to challenge him to a duel that he is certain to lose, and the terms are that upon his loss, he must return to his village. The illustrations are caricatures, with Sancho Panza and Don Quijote’s horse portrayed as constantly dumbfounded. The illustrator initals each page, and the result is distracting. The layout is such that several pages seem cramped with too much text. Although much of the vocabulary and many of the situations will have to be explained, young readers who enjoy knights and humor might enjoy this first foray into this classic tale.—Stacy Dillon, LREI, New York City


K-Gr 3—Funny from start to finish, these superbly crafted poems and inventive illustrations celebrate the extraordinary, odd, and seldom heard of holidays that the elementary-school crowd will love. Raff’s intelligent artwork adds to the lighthearted play with many surprises. On “Worm Day” (March 15th), a troupe of worm scouts sporting their uniform scarves listens attentively while the scout master points toward a map of key locations next to an anatomical diagram of their subject, the robin. In another poem, an oversize Mac West of a cat, wearing a crown, reclines regally on the couch while confetti falls the air and balls of yarn dangle from the ceiling like balloons—it’s “Happy New Year”—and the dog of the house looks on confused. Lewis writes, “On New Year’s Day, Let my cat be The Queen of Purritos—” January 16th is “Dragoon Appreciation Day,” and the dragons are feasting. Some of the tips on their etiquette menu include, “Never blow on your soup. That only makes it hotter” and “Play with your food, but don’t let it run around screaming.” For “National Skunk Day,” the illustration shows a skunk posing for a photo beside a bottle of spray perfume while the photographers and lighting crew—all rats-struggle to repress their olfactory impulses. The entire book is such fun that children will want to shout, “It’s J. Patrick Lewis Day!”—Teressa Pfeifer, The Springfield Renaissance School, Springfield, MA


Gr 2-4—Beginning, fluent readers with an interest in aviation will treasure this title. Simple narration explains the sights, sounds, and mechanics of a flight from a passenger’s perspective. Readers are invited to look for his suitcase (marked with a red arrow) going up the loading ramp, “notice the cockpit,” and look through the window to view the runway and the flaps on the wing. Simple yet detailed drawings explain how the wings provide lift for the
plane and change its direction and that the force of air through the engine provides thrust to carry the plane through space. One speed depicts the function of radar by day and night. The beautifully colored illustrations beg for repeated viewings and a larger trim size, but the narrow lines of text in an early-reader format will help children feel comfortable with the information and new terms introduced. Whether this is shelved in nonfiction or beginning-reader collections, it will find an appreciative audience.—Laura Scott, Farmington Community Library, MI


PreS-Gr 2—The art stars in this "light but faithful summary" (according to the jacket flap) of the Old Testament. The extremely brief overviews of biblical stories do not provide enough context to act as introductions, but can act as a reminder for those familiar with the tales. Bold paper-cut collages pop against black pages, as does the large white text. Both art and narrative are scrupulously footnoted. A "Read more" section lists the biblical chapter in which each referenced story may be found. Another section, called "The fine print," gives the source for the paper used in each illustration. While the narrative is too sketchy to be engaging, readers will pore over the illustrations. A good choice to supplement collections that already offer meetier versions of Bible stories.—Heidi Estrin, Congregation B'nai Israel, Boca Raton, FL


Gr 3-6—This collection of 10 short stories, well-known and original, will fire up readers' imaginations. The selections have been culled from mythology and folklore and include the traditional Saint George (referred to here simply as George) and Edith Nesbit's more recent 'Deliverers of Their Country' (referred to here as 'The Dragon Swarms'). These classic tales have been adapted for shorter attention spans, condensing descriptions and dialogue and keeping the focus on action. The five original stories offer new material for dragon lovers and storytellers alike. The closing story, "The Smallest Dragon," explains the reason books have chapters, cautioning bookworms everywhere. As the title implies, most of the creatures included here are dangerous and cunning, but any carnage is passed over, leaving readers to fill in details. The fire-red cover with a green scaly spine invites readers in. Additional cartoon illustrations are in black and white and in color. Full-bleed spreads and full spreads of text with spot illustrations add variety. Unfortunate conflicts with the gutter dampen the impact of some of the spreads. Story threads are sometimes dropped, leaving careful readers with questions, but overall, dragon lovers will warm up to these tales.—Carol S. Surges, Longfellow Middle School, Wauwatosa, WI


Gr 2-4—Visual artist Imogen Cunningham is noted as one of the finest photographers of the early 20th century. Born to a family that valued hard work and education, she learned from her father as he taught her to read and how to draw. As a teenager, she first declared that she wanted to be a photographer; when she married, her photography focused on her surroundings and her family life also became the source of her art. Three young boys, a garden, and little money encouraged her to develop her skills in new ways. "You can't expect things to be smooth and easy. You just have to work, find your way out, and do anything you can yourself." She created a garden for her boys, and while they played and found wonder in nature, she used her camera. Images in the book replicate her photographs through paint and drawings, taking readers through passing time and documenting her discovery of nature's beauty around her. An author's note and one of Cunningham's photographs give a glimpse of her family; readers are also encouraged to discover more about the artist through a website, books, and film. A view of an evolving art form, this offering reminds youngsters that talent is important, but that success often requires perseverance and devotion.—Mary Elam, Learning Media Services, Piano ISD, TX


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