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PLAYING WITH MATH

• Bruce McMillan •

When I was in school, math was a tool—a tool to be enjoyed as I learned how to use it. I enjoyed the logic of mathematics. It made so much sense. But it didn't seem like the kind of thing one would chat about with others, so I didn't. I still don't chat about math. But I've made math a part of my work. Of the thirty children's books I've written and photo-illustrated, five are math-related.

What I try to bring to my math-related concept books is what appealed to me during my early experiences with math—a fun time with logic. For example, I once thought about doing a book introducing the concept of the simplest number set of all—the pair. The story line of this book, *ONE, TWO, ONE PAIR!* (Scholastic), is the anticipation and joy of going ice skating. As with most of my concept books, I decided on a visual narrative approach. Early in the story I provide a subtle clue to the surprise ending. What appears to be one person putting on a pair of socks, mittens, skates, laces, and so on is actually a pair of people—twins.

Before photographing this book, I contacted a respected teacher from the largest school district in Maine and asked for a list of their K–6 teaching objectives for math. I was interested in which math skills students were expected to know at each grade level. Since my books are often used as teaching tools, in effect I'm a teacher as well as an author.

The list of math objectives stimulated a new book idea: cooking fractions. I like to cook. I first thought of doing this book for grade levels 3–6, based on the age levels in the list of objectives. I planned to show additive fractional units as children cooked something sumptuous and then subtractive fractional units as they ate it. However, I couldn't sell the idea to a publisher. They decided that this age group, grades 3–6, was too old for a picture book. So, I simplified my idea and refocused it for grades K–3. The result, *EATING FRACTIONS* (Scholastic), is about a meal. Two children divide and share what they eat as fractional units. Each fractional unit is displayed on the left page in a photograph, graphic, and text, while the visual story line appears on the facing right page. The story progresses from halves to thirds to fourths. Then, to reinforce learning this concept, the story continues and repeats the progression of halves, thirds, and fourths, followed by a visual surprise—plus recipes—at the end.



Bruce McMillan; photo by Benner McGee

Obviously, the list of teaching objectives was informative in pointing out what teachers are teaching. But it also showed me that the corresponding age levels aren't written in stone. When autographing this book at schools, bookstores, and libraries, I've noticed that the readers I'm autographing for range from kindergartners to fifth-graders. My approach served as an introduction to fractions for younger students and at the same time reinforced the concept for older readers.

While I made *EATING FRACTIONS* for children to enjoy as a story, as well as to help them learn a new concept, the overwhelming positive response from teachers has been gratifying. Thanks to them, it has become one of my biggest-selling books. I thought it would do well, but not quite this well. Teachers have told me one of the reasons why. Repeatedly, I heard, "There aren't any quality books about fractions. And we all teach fractions." *EATING FRACTIONS* filled a void.

Teachers have also told me how *EATING FRACTIONS* has led to hands-on learning. That's why I included the recipes. I'm a hands-on learner, and when I was planning this book I could foresee children dividing food, looking forward to eating it, and actually learning along the way.

There was another reason besides math for doing *ONE, TWO, ONE PAIR!* and *EATING FRACTIONS*. I'd just completed my own twelve-year hands-on project—my house. Though I recently traveled far away to photograph a forthcoming book, *PENGUINS AT HOME: GENTOOS OF ANTARCTICA* (Houghton Mifflin), I didn't have to go far at all to photograph the math concept books—my newly finished home was the perfect setting for both.

Geometry is a subject that lends itself to a visual approach. I selected the "vehicle" to tell this story. Recalling my childhood field trips to a fire station in Bangor, Maine, I remembered the thrill of stepping out into a void, grabbing hold of the fire pole, and sliding down to the floor below where the fire engines were parked and ready to go. So began *FIRE ENGINE SHAPES* (Lothrop). It takes a graphic look at the geometric shapes found on parts of a fire engine, but I also included a game because I like to play. The little girl exploring the fire engine can be found in every photo, but it takes careful observation to do so. I thought the idea of looking for shapes while looking for the little girl would engage the minds of young readers. Had I foreseen how popular this phenomenon would become—looking for a person hidden in the illustration of a book—I might have titled this book *WHERE'S STEPHANIE?* Waldo had not yet made his debut.

When I'm out speaking at schools I always like to bring along some surprises and props. I wish that my tricycle, the "star" of *THE REMARKABLE RIDERLESS RUNAWAY TRICYCLE* (Apple Island Books), could collect frequent-flyer miles, as it often accompanies me on trips. On a few special occasions I've brought along a very large prop. In some of Maine's elementary schools, I've introduced students to "My 'star' . . . waiting outside by the playground . . . too big to come inside." When we go outside we find Engine 5, the very same one photographed in *FIRE ENGINE SHAPES*. It's a treat to see a whole school, class by class, walking around the actual fire engine, and picking out the geometric shapes.

The first numbers that children often utilize are related to time. When I began work on *TIME TO . . .* (Lothrop) I had to consider a variety of clocks. I settled on a traditional-looking clock face, but there was a dilemma. A few years ago this wouldn't have applied but now it does: digital clock faces. So, in addition to using the traditional clock face, I also included the time in digital format on the same page.

In *TIME TO . . .* the progression of a child's day is seen in the photo on the right page, and the photo on the left page features a clock on the young boy's wall. What readers may not be aware of is that, although it appears the clock wall photos were taken in the boy's room, they weren't. I used extra wallpaper on a propped-up sheet of wallboard to make a false wall set and placed it in my new living room, twenty miles away. This way I could control the lighting in order to show the progression of time throughout the day.

I teach a children's picture book course, open

to the public, at the University of Southern Maine and the University of New Hampshire. *TIME TO . . .* provided me with an example to use in my children's book classes of how two artists, working independently and having never met nor exchanged correspondence, can approach a theme and concept in a similar manner. It's fortunate that my book, *TIME TO . . .*, and Mordicai Gerstein's book, *A SUN'S DAY* (HarperCollins), were published at about the same time because it's uncanny how similar they are. The identical details in each book both amuse and amaze me.

My college degree is in biology and so when I began work on my first math concept book, *COUNTING WILDFLOWERS* (Lothrop), it was also a taxonomy lesson. My editor and I agreed that children would be interested in wildflowers rather than garden flowers. It was a search for wildflowers which blossom at various times throughout the season. Every species of flower has its own biological clock. That's why I couldn't photograph dandelions—they had already blossomed and gone to seed by the time I began shooting.

COUNTING WILDFLOWERS concludes with a photo of maiden pinks. After counting from one to twenty wildflowers, the reader finds a photograph filled with a profusion of delicate pink blossoms. What the reader doesn't know is that the photo was taken of flowers growing on very fertile ground—my septic field. Once again, I was photographing a math concept at home.

The profusion of flowers in that particular photo inspired a comment from a teacher which led me to a concept that may be what I focus on in my next math-related book. When I spoke at last year's annual Math Their Way Conference I floated this idea by some of the teachers. They all said, "That's great, we need a book on that." The topic? You'll just have to wait to find out. But I can tell you one thing. Though it's a math concept book, unlike four of my previous math concept books, it probably won't be photographed at my home—but you never know.

Bruce McMillan is a writer, photo-illustrator, speaker, and teacher. He photographs and writes both concept books and science/nature books for children. His math concept books have been distinguished with honors including ALA Notable Books, Parenting magazine's Certificate of Excellence, Parent's Magazine Best Kids' Books, and many starred reviews. His 1993 titles are MOUSE VIEWS: WHAT THE CLASS PET SAW (Holiday House), and A BEACH FOR THE BIRDS and PENGUINS AT HOME: GENTOOS OF ANTARCTICA (both Houghton Mifflin).

COUNTING ON NUMBER BOOKS

• Lester L. Laminack •

"One, two, three, four, five. . ." Counting seems simple enough. Hey, it can't be all that difficult. After all, even little kids can count. But wait, saying the words and understanding the concepts are not the same. Seeing the numeral "3" and saying the word "three" isn't the same as seeing three kittens playing on the floor and saying, "Look at the three kittens. Aren't they having fun?" The ability to name numbers or count out loud doesn't mean that children understand the quantities these words represent.

Eavesdrop on a small group of young children counting out blocks during a play situation: "one, two, three, four, five. . ." The words are all correct and even the sequence of the numerals is appropriate. However, if you observe carefully while the child is counting you may notice the child moving the blocks somewhat more rapidly or more slowly than he/she says the number words. Kamii urges us to recognize that "(r)epresentations with signs is overemphasized in early childhood education. . . . Teachers too often teach children to count and to read and write numerals, believing that they are thereby teaching number concepts. It is good for children to learn to count and to read and write numerals, but a more important objective is for the child to construct the mental structure of the number" (Kamii, Constance, 1982).

Reflect on your own childhood and the interactions of adults you know with their own children. To what extent do these interactions focus on rote memorization and parroting back a sequence of words (one, two, three, four. . .)? Most of us have observed a scenario something like this one, "Sweetie, count for mommy, come on, show Margaret how you can count for mommy. One . . . two . . . come on, you can do it." This type of coaxing and repetitive activity may indeed result in the child being able to name a sequence of number words, but it does not facilitate that child's understanding of the quantity involved.

Scenarios such as this aren't unusual; in fact, the naming of number words is a familiar ritual in memories of childhood. Many of us recall the chants, rhymes, and songs of generations past. We learned "one, two, buckle my shoe, three, four, shut the door, five, six, pick up sticks. . ." and many others from significant adults and older children in our lives. Each of us has a personal repertoire of chants, rhymes,



Lester L. Laminack; photo by Mark Haskett

and songs with number words embedded in the appropriate sequence. What we must recognize is that these experiences helped us to learn only the names and the sequences of those words. The concepts of number, or the quantities represented by number names, were constructed over time through many experiences. Kamii tells us that children begin to construct those understandings from their experiences with actual objects. "All the spoken and written numbers in the world are only surface knowledge. While there must be spoken and written numbers in the environment for the child to become interested in them, understanding them can come only from the mental structure that he constructs from within. . . . Since this structure cannot be taught directly, the teacher must focus on encouraging the child to think actively and autonomously in all kinds of situations. A child who thinks actively in his own way about all kinds of objects and events, including quantities, will inevitably construct number."

All this is not to say that children should be discouraged from learning to count. Rather, Kamii argues that "(c)ounting is . . . a joy for most preschool and kindergarten children, and if children want to learn to count, there is no reason to refuse this knowledge. The teacher must, however, know the difference between counting by rote and counting with numerical meaning." Young children can begin to construct number concepts through everyday situations such as setting the table—one place mat, one plate, one glass, one fork. At times the child may be asked to bring three napkins or enough plates for everyone in the family. Even getting dressed offers opportunities for constructing number concepts—two feet, two

socks, two shoes, two arms, two sleeves. Daily routines such as these provide a predictable structure that assist the child in making sense of the connections between the quantity and the number names.

Counting books and number concept books also provide opportunities for children and significant adults to name and count familiar objects depicted in sets with corresponding numerals. "The counting book presents numbers, usually 1 through 10, in order to acquaint young children with the numerals and their shapes (1, 2, 3 . . .), the number names (one, two, three . . .), the concept of how many each numeral represents, and the counting sequence" (C. Lynch-Brown and C. M. Tomlinson, 1993). Books like Eric Carle's 1, 2, 3 TO THE ZOO: A COUNTING BOOK provide for children the opportunity to connect the numeral and number as they count the familiar animals riding on a train heading for the zoo. An added feature of this book is that each full-page spread depicts the numeral in the upper left corner along with a train car carrying that quantity of yet another animal. For example, there are six green alligators, seven blue seals, eight brown monkeys. Along the bottom of each full page spread you see a miniature version of all the train cars that have preceded the page now in view. This opens possibilities for talking about ordinal numbers or discussing the sequence of both numeral and number. In his book, THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR, Eric Carle provides opportunities for the reader/listener to explore numbers one through ten and the days of the week. In addition, Carle allows the participant to witness the life cycle of the caterpillar.

Books such as HAND RHYMES and FINGER RHYMES by Marc Brown present other opportunities to explore number concepts through popular finger plays and hand games. These books are best for shared experiences with younger children as read-alouds.

A more complex number concept book with a focus of keen interest to younger children is WAITING FOR SUNDAY by Carol Blackburn. In this book a young child counts down the days until Sunday—her birthday. On each full-page spread the text begins by naming the day ("Today is Thursday—three more days, three more days, and it's my birthday") and then gives the child one more clue about what the surprise will be. On the page the child is depicted in routine activities for that day. Near the bottom center of each page there is always a stack of numbered blocks that decreases by one with each turn of the page.

Counting books and other number concept books can be a valuable asset to teachers and

other adults who play significant roles in the lives of young children. Although these books will not develop number concepts alone, they can be useful tools for facilitating the child's construction of number.

The following is a list of above mentioned and other counting/number concept books:

- Bang, Molly, TEN, NINE, EIGHT, 1983, Greenwillow
Blackburn, Carol, WAITING FOR SUNDAY, 1985, Scholastic
Brown, Marc, FINGER RHYMES, 1980, Dutton
———, HAND RHYMES, 1985, Dutton
Carle, Eric, MY VERY FIRST BOOK OF NUMBERS, 1974, Crowell/HarperCollins
———, 1, 2, 3 TO THE ZOO: A COUNTING BOOK, 1968/88, Philomel
———, THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR, 1974, Philomel
Dunrea, Olivier, DEEP DOWN UNDERGROUND, 1989, Macmillan
Hoban, Tana, COUNT AND SEE, 1972, Macmillan
———, 1, 2, 3, 1985, Greenwillow
———, 26 LETTERS AND 99 CENTS, 1987, Greenwillow
Hutchins, Pat, THE DOORBELL RANG, 1986, Greenwillow
Macmillan, Bruce, COUNTING WILDFLOWERS, 1986, Lothrop
Tafari, Nancy, WHO'S COUNTING?, 1986, Greenwillow

Works cited:

- Kamii, Constance, NUMBERS IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN, 1982, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, DC
Lynch-Brown, Carol, and Carl M. Tomlinson, ESSENTIALS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, 1993, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA

For further reading:

- Whitin, David J., and Sandra Wilde, READ ANY GOOD MATH LATELY? CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR MATHEMATICAL LEARNING K-6, 1992, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH

Lester L. Laminack, Head of the Department of Elementary Education and Reading at Western Carolina University, teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in early childhood and literacy education. He is also a member of the Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children selection committee, a project of the National Science Teachers Association-CBC Joint Committee.

Don't forget to place your order early for the 1993 Book Week materials. Take a look at CBC's Fall 1993 Materials Brochure. Don't have one? Just send a 6" x 9" self-addressed, stamped (2 oz. first class postage) envelope to: Children's Book Council, Att: Materials Brochure, 568 Broadway, Suite 404, New York, NY 10012.

THE ROLE OF MATH BOOKS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

• Danita Nichols •

As a children's librarian in a busy Bronx library, I'm frequently asked, "Where are your math books?" Alas, too frequently, I am unable to satisfy the petitioner. My math section consists of a handful of titles, two of which are on math history—hardly a subject needed by the typical elementary school student. Yes, I also have pictorial math concept books scattered throughout the picture book section, but these deal primarily with a small range of subjects for the youngest children.

Where are the books to help the fifth-grader struggling with division? I must be honest here—I am working with a collection that is recovering from years of budget crises, but even within these limits it is clear to see that children's books do not cover mathematics as fully as they do, say, science or history.

While math concept books may be few, the audience for them certainly is not, and that audience comes into public libraries looking for them. It consists, as you might suspect, of children worried about school assignments they don't quite grasp, and of their parents worried about their children's grades or test scores, or merely hoping to give them a good start. As most parents are not mathematicians (few of us are!), they want books to help them explain subjects they haven't thought much about since they were in grade school, and they may need to have the concept clarified for themselves as well as for their children.

Teachers are the third segment of the children's math book audience and, given current educational trends, likely to be the fastest-growing segment. Teachers are, more than ever, using children's books to help teach all curricular subjects. They are responding to a philosophy that encourages a cross-disciplinary approach to elementary school education and advocates bringing books into all subject areas. Educational philosophies are ever shifting, but it appears that this trend will be with us for some time, in one form or another. As a result, teachers are using public libraries more than ever, searching for titles that can serve as springboards for lesson plans. For math lessons, these books may be only loosely tied to math concepts. A kindergarten teacher might, for example, use Esphyr Slobodkina's *CAPS FOR SALE* (Scholastic) to introduce a pattern-finding activity, since the peddler sorts his caps by color. But teachers are also interested in well-



Danita Nichols

designed books teaching math concepts directly. They want books they can use to supplement their classroom texts.

Teachers, parents, and children bring in different expectations, likes, and perspectives when they look for math books, but they share one thing. They all want books that help children learn math. But what makes a particular math book work? What do math concept books have to offer children?

I asked myself these questions as I examined a variety of math concept books currently available on New York Public Library shelves. I didn't conduct an extensive bibliographic search to locate these books. I just chose them from shelves of several branches, so that I was looking at a representative sample of the materials our library users might actually find. Since they are part of New York Public Library collections, I know that they have received at least one positive review by a public librarian.

As I looked at the assortment of titles, I asked myself what kind of math learning they offer young readers, and what else do we need if we are to develop a strong, well-balanced math collection. An initial observation is that this is a set of visually appealing books. From Tana Hoban's striking photography to Donald Crews's colorful graphics to Mitsumasa Anno's detailed drawings, these are especially attractive and well-designed books. They invite the reader to open them up. And since many children, especially those who have had difficulties with school math assignments, run the other way at the mere mention of math, this visual appeal is important for enticing reluctant learners. Children that want to learn are certainly more likely to do so.

But beyond making math lessons palatable, the illustrations in these math concept books are integral to the book's lesson. It's no accident that so many of the titles are in picture book format, because the pictures provide a visual image for abstract mathematical principles. Children are concrete thinkers, and math itself is rooted in the concrete, since it describes and analyzes the physical world. It is no wonder, then, that many children have difficulty with the abstract arithmetic operations they must master in elementary school and that, after mastering them, have even more difficulty applying them to real-world situations. They haven't learned the essential logic behind the symbols, but a visual image can help make the bridge between the real world and the mathematical symbol. So, when children look at Bruce McMillan's photographs of two boys and a dog sharing lunch in *EATING FRACTIONS* (Scholastic), the pizza slices and banana halves teach them the meaning behind the symbols $1/2$, $1/3$, and $1/4$.

Word problems are the bane of the young student's school day. In the library, they are the form of math assignment that most often sends them running for the librarian's help.

Although many of the concept books I examined promote problem-solving techniques, Paul Giganti's *EACH ORANGE HAD 8 SLICES* (Greenwillow), illustrated by Donald Crews, is perhaps the most obviously connected with my young patron's difficulty with word problems. Subtitled *A Counting Book*, and certainly useful in that way, it is also a set of multiplication word problems, such as: "On my way to lunch I ate 2 juicy oranges. Each orange had 8 slices. Each slice had 2 small seeds. How many juicy oranges were there? How many slices were there? How many seeds were there in all?" The answer is, of course, in the illustration, so young readers do not have to fear failure. But they will be encouraged to think mathematically about the world around them and to put everyday math problems into words.

Books can help children see the relevance of math. A favorite primary-age math story now is Pat Hutchins's *THE DOORBELL RANG* (Greenwillow), in which children divide a tray of cookies among an ever-increasing number of people. And what else could be more important than making sure that treats are distributed equitably?

A few of the titles attempt to overcome the math concept book's basic limitation—that it is a two-dimensional object filled with symbols, while children learn math best by manipulating concrete objects. Some good examples are the aforementioned *EATING FRACTIONS*, which includes recipes so children can practice real-life

fractions; Mitsumasa Anno's *ANNO'S MATH GAMES* (Philomel), which encourages children to work with tangram-like puzzles; and Marilyn Burns's *I HATE MATHEMATICS! BOOK* (Little, Brown), in which children sit on busy street corners collecting statistics on how many shoes have shoelaces.

The best children's math concept books invite young readers in, give them visual images, help them develop necessary language and problem-solving skills, and offer suggestions for additional learning activities, all in a non-threatening context. No tests. No worksheets. No irritated adult eager or anxious to get on to something else.

What public libraries need now are more books of this caliber that help close the gaps in our collections. Right now, it appears that most of the titles available are directed to the youngest children—preschool through grade 2—and involve the most beginning concepts, such as one-to-one correspondence, one more and one less, and simple pattern-finding. We need well-designed books aimed at middle- and upper-grade children, covering concepts such as decimals, arithmetic operations with fractions, positive and negative numbers, and other concepts that children find difficult. Concepts related to graphing, statistics, and measurement seem to lend themselves to imaginative, pictorial treatment, and would be good subjects to explore in future publishing ventures. There is certainly also room for attractive math concept series.

Parents, though trying to help their children, are often uncertain as to what it is that they need. They do know, however, that their child is in grade 4 and that she or he is having trouble in math, so they ask for fourth-grade textbooks. The public library seldom buys textbooks and, at any rate, their child has already failed to learn from the school textbook, so it unlikely that another will help. Yet they do need books that tell them clearly what children can learn from them and how it will assist their child with fourth-grade math homework. Any series of trade books that can do this effectively would be warmly embraced by frustrated moms and dads.

There's an open market for children's math concept books today, and plenty of room for authors and illustrators wishing to exercise their imaginative powers conveying math principles. If the resulting books are attractive and exciting enough, perhaps our young students will be eased painlessly into math literacy.

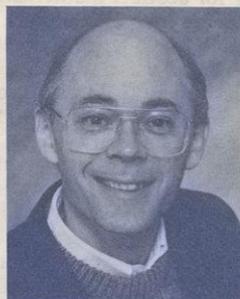
UNDERSTANDING MATH CONCEPTS

• David J. Whitin •

If we want children to be more successful in mathematics, we need to read to them more. Through fiction and non-fiction books children can come to appreciate the authentic contexts in which mathematics naturally occurs. Thinking mathematically is not an act of pushing around meaningless abstract symbols on a page; rather, it is a tool for helping us tell stories about the world we live in. Children's books can play a key role in restoring the story to the teaching and learning of mathematical ideas.

Take the concept of a factorial. Most of us in school were probably taught about this notion in a rather rote manner: "To solve the problem of '5 factorial,' shown as $5!$, merely multiply together all natural numbers from one up to the number expressed in the current problem. In this case, multiply $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5$, for an answer of 120." We were then given pages of problems to solve, and if we followed these directions and performed the proper calculations, we obtained all the right answers. However, these silly exercises do not constitute mathematical thinking; rather, they exemplify what William Glasser calls "throwaway knowledge"—we memorize the rules, take the test, and then throw the knowledge away. This kind of mathematics does not enrich the day's living. What is missing is the story behind these numbers. If someone had asked us to tell a story about a factorial that shows its use in everyday life, we would be hard-pressed to do so. However, unless we can tell a story about a mathematical concept, we don't understand it. Books can help to change this.

The story of a factorial is beautifully displayed in ANNO'S MYSTERIOUS MULTIPLYING JAR by Anno (Philomel). The book invites readers into a mysterious jar that contains two islands, with three mountains per island, four castles per mountain, and so on, up to a final ten jars in each of nine cupboards. Factorials are represented when, to determine the number of castles, for instance, one multiplies $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4$. Children can then use this story as a basis for generating their own factorial stories. For example, Robert, a fourth-grade student, drew a detailed picture of an imaginary world and wrote: "There was 1 planet. It had 2 hemispheres. Each hemisphere had 3 continents. Each continent had 4 countries, and each country had 5 states." To determine the number of states in his world we must multiply $1 \times 2 \times$



David J. Whitin

$3 \times 4 \times 5$, or 120 states. Another fourth-grade student, Van, wrote: "Once there was 1 limousine. In that limousine there were 2 seats. Under each seat there were 3 coolers. In each ice cooler there were 4 cases of soda. Under each case of soda there were 5 bags of ice. Under each bag of ice there were 6 sandwiches." To determine the number of sandwiches we must multiply $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6$, or 720 sandwiches. Thus, children's books can be a vehicle for sharing mathematical stories with learners and for encouraging them to create some of their own mathematical tales. If we are using mathematical concepts to help us tell stories, then we are in the business of thinking mathematically.

There are other children's books that represent another kind of numerical sequence. The doubling pattern of two, known as the binomial sequence, is nicely portrayed in three stories: David Birch's THE KING'S CHESSBOARD (Dial), Helena Pittman's A GRAIN OF RICE (Hastings House) and E. Nesbit's MELISANDE (Harcourt Brace). These first two stories are both versions of an old tale found in Persia, India, and China. In the Birch version, the king wants to reward his grand vizier—his principal advisor—for all his helpfulness. Although the king offers jewels, palaces, and other lavish gifts, the grand vizier insists on nothing. However, when the king becomes impatient, the grand vizier observes a chessboard in the king's throne room and proposes the following reward: For the first square on the chessboard give me one grain of rice; then give me twice that amount on the second day (2 grains), twice this amount on the third day (4 grains), and so on, until you reach the 64th square on the board. Although the king felt the request was

far too menial, he eventually agreed to its terms. However, the king, along with most readers, are in for a rude awakening. The number of grains of rice begins innocently enough (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024 . . .) but, by the time the thirtieth day rolls around, the number is astronomical and all the granaries of the kingdom cannot meet the grand vizier's request. Children who enjoy large numbers and like using the calculator may want to determine the final figure. Children also enjoy doubling a penny each day to see how soon they could become millionaires (it's a lot sooner than you think!). After being involved in this kind of experience fifth-grade student Mathew remarked, "I learned that small things can double into large things very quickly!" Teachers can also show how this geometric progress of doubling relates to the growth of bacteria, in science classes, populations of various countries, in social studies, and the spread of AIDS, as students discuss this important issue in health classes. However, it is books such as *THE KING'S CHESSBOARD* that provide a beginning place for understanding this mathematical concept.

MELISANDE demonstrates this same numerical sequence through the concept of length and not discrete objects such as grains of rice. It is a fairy tale about a princess who is cursed by an evil fairy at her Christening and grows up beautiful but bald. When she is finally granted one wish, she asks for golden hair a yard long that grows an inch every day and twice as fast when it is cut. Naturally, problems of mathematical proportion begin to arise! When her hair is cut the first time, it grows back 2 inches per day; as it is cut again, it grows back 4 inches per day, then 8, 16, 32, and so on. Children can experiment with this doubling sequence of lengths using a ball of string. Have children measure off a foot of string, then double the length of the string by folding it at the one foot mark, then double it again. Challenge them to figure out how many times they would have to double the string to have a piece long enough to stretch across their room, down the hallway, across the country, and around the world. Amazingly, it would take only 27 doublings to wrap around the earth, and 31 doublings to reach beyond the moon. MELISANDE can be a good starting place for these kind of investigations.

Books can also provide stories for numbers that seem too difficult to understand. David M. Schwartz helps readers understand the magnitude of large numbers in his well-known book *HOW MUCH IS A MILLION?* (Lothrop). This book ought to be required reading for anyone

elected to public office! Although a million, billion, and trillion may sound the same, their differences in magnitude are great. Schwartz conveys those differences dramatically when he describes how it would take 23 days of non-stop counting to reach one million, 95 years to reach one billion, and over 200,000 years to reach one trillion. Teachers can encourage children to create their own stories for one million. For instance, one group of Girl Scouts (by the way, Girl Scouts can now earn a mathematics badge—hooray!) felt no one would be so foolish as to count for 23 consecutive days. They decided to make the story more plausible. They used a calculator to figure out how long each person in their troop of 20 girls would have to count if they divided the task equally. Their answer of 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours per person was still a difficult assignment, but they felt it was much more realistic than 23 consecutive days. Other students have calculated how old they would be if they lived to be one million seconds, or one million minutes; others determined how long it would take to bounce a basketball one million times, or how far one million paces would be; another person figured out if it were possible for the average person to drink a million gallons of water in a lifetime, while some sixth-grade students wanted to find out how many schools of their size they would need to have to show one million kids. Schwartz's book, along with the children's explorations, provide important stories that act as meaningful reference points for understanding large numbers.

Other books contain stories of still other mathematical concepts. The beautifully illustrated *SEA SQUARES* by Joy Hulme (Hyperion) introduces readers to the concept of square numbers. The book depicts a variety of sea creatures: 1 one-ton whale, 3 three-striped clownfish (with a total of 9 stripes in fishy places), 5 five-feathered sea lilies (with a total of 25 fronds in motion), up to 10 squirmy squids with 100 swishing tails. The author has created a rhyming four-line stanza for each creature, such as "Six six-pointed sea stars, with rays all around, Turning seaside somersaults on the sandy ground. That's only 6 sea stars sprawling, But 36 arms are crawling." Teachers can challenge students afterwards with creating square shapes using any number of one-inch-square pieces of paper. The story helps children view multiplication as a process of repeated addition; the experience of creating successively larger squares helps children understand the squareness of numbers from a geometric perspective.

The concept of time, which is a difficult one

for even older children to understand, is represented nicely in a variety of books for students in grades 4–6. *ANNO'S SUNDIAL* by Anno (Philomel) introduces readers to the idea that the earth is really one large sundial. It is a pop-up book that allows students to lay out certain pages in the sunlight and tell time just as people did centuries ago. Because of the tilt of the earth's axis as it revolves around the sun, sundials used by people in various places on earth differ from place to place. Anno shows reader how to construct a sundial that is suitable for their own locale. A comparison piece to this book is another one by Anno entitled *ALL IN A DAY* (Philomel). Illustrated by ten internationally known artists, this book represents a day in the lives of children in eight different countries around the world. The discussion of time zones in the back of the book complements the information about sundials that Anno offers in his first book. Another book to extend this investigation about time is *Bernie Zubrowski's CLOCKS* (Beech Tree). It provides a wealth of information about a variety of historical timepieces and gives detailed, easy-to-follow instructions for readers to create some of their own model timepieces. We learn about Arabic astrolabes (hand-held sundials), Egyptian water clocks, Greek siphon clocks, Chinese water wheel clocks, and German and Italian mechanical clocks. Readers can also build twelve different timepieces and test their accuracy with more than sixty different experiments. Children often do not have any understanding of the historical development of our measurement system. Zubrowski's book not only gives an interesting historical perspective but invites active participation from the children as well.

Another fascinating look at time is shown by *Renata von Tscharnar and Ronald Fleming* in their book *NEW PROVIDENCE* (Harcourt Brace). This book does not focus on the mechanical aspects of keeping and telling time but rather on the passage of time. The text and illustrations trace the development of a typical American city from the turn of the century to the 1980's. The time periods of 1910, 1935, 1955, 1970, 1980, and 1987 show a variety of architectural and societal changes as this imaginary cityscape of New Providence is transformed in different ways. Although the city is fictional, almost every detail in the illustrations is authentic, having been discovered in old photographs by the architectural team that helped to design this book. This fascinating account of change over time might prompt children to investigate their own town's archives and document important changes over time that have occurred in their area.

Two last books that give interesting accounts of the lives of famous mathematicians are *Luetta and Wilbert Reimer's MATHEMATICIANS ARE PEOPLE, TOO* (Dale Seymour Publications) and *Teri Perl's MATH EQUALS* (Addison-Wesley). In the Reimer book readers learn some fascinating anecdotes from the lives of these well-known people. For example, Leonhard Euler wrote more mathematics than anyone, even after he had become totally blind; Sophie Germain had to disobey her parents to study mathematics; and Blaise Pascal made one of his most important discoveries because of a toothache. Children might enjoy testing out some of the ideas in this book as well, such as constructing Napier's famous calculating rods, or using Gauss's efficient strategy for adding a long list of consecutive numbers. *MATH EQUALS* explores the lives of a number of women who made significant contributions to mathematics. The author includes a variety of mathematical explorations at the end of each biography so readers can investigate some of the same topics that interested each of these women. For instance, as an extension of *Ada Byron Lovelace's* work, readers are invited to use the technique of finite differences to participate in three activities and two games.

Books can restore the story to the teaching and learning of mathematical ideas. It is through books that children can see mathematics not as a series of rules to carry out on a workbook page but as a tool for telling stories and describing our world. As one sixth-grader aptly remarked, "Books give math a boost of interestment to my knowledge." Let's all continue that boost, as we keep sharing books for learning mathematics.

David J. Whitin is an associate professor of elementary education at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. He regularly writes articles for library, language, and mathematics journals and recently co-authored his second book, READ ANY GOOD MATH LATELY? CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR MATHEMATICAL LEARNING K-6 (1992, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH).

A WORD OF THANKS

The Winter-Spring 1993 issue of *CBC Features* was the first in our new format. We told you a little bit about the new design, and asked you for your comments.

Your calls and letters tell us that, while we're not quite perfect, we're very much what you want to see. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous response, and tell you that we will continue to strive to make *CBC Features* the best newsletter we can give you.

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What you get

10 each of the following seven bookmarks which feature titles listed below and backlist of corresponding author: Avi's *NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH*; Lynne Reid Banks' *ONE MORE RIVER*; Mary Downing Hahn's *THE SPANISH KIDNAPPING DISASTER*; James Howe's *RETURN TO HOWLIDAY INN*; Nancy McArthur's *THE SECRET OF THE PLANT THAT ATE DIRTY SOCKS*; Carolyn Reeder's *GRANDPA'S MOUNTAIN*; and Theodore Taylor's *THE WEIRDO*.

GHOSTWRITER bookmarks in quantities of 20

17" x 22" full-color poster featuring five paperback reissues: *UNCLE NACHO'S HAT*; *FAMILY PICTURES*; *THE INVISIBLE HUNTERS*; *NINE-IN-ONE, GRR! GRR!*; and *BABY RATTLESNAKE*.

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Poster featuring *THE DRAGONS ARE SINGING TONIGHT*, poems by Jack Prelutsky, with pictures by Peter Sis.

A color wheel/poetry sampler from *OUT OF THE BLUE: POEMS ABOUT COLOR*, by Hiawyn Oram, illus. by David McKee.

A KINGFISHER GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS: FUN, GAMES, AND . . . GEOGRAPHY? This guide offers geography-based activities and suggestions to help stimulate children's interest in and understanding of the world around them.

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Poster featuring THE JOKE'S ON
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The purpose of The Children's Book Council is to promote the use and enjoyment of children's trade books and to disseminate information about books for young people and about children's trade book publishing.

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BOOK WEEK ARTISTS ROUNDUP

1993 marks the 74th observance of National Children's Book Week, which the Children's Book Council has sponsored since 1945. Top children's book artists were invited to create original materials to help everyone celebrate Book Week.

The theme and artists were selected by the 1993 Book Week Committee: Barbara Lalicki (Bradbury), Chair; Simon Boughton (Crown); Audrey Cusson

(Puffin); Thea Feldman (Disney/Hyperion); Barbara Fitzsimmons (Morrow); and Dianne Hess (Scholastic).

If you are not on our mailing list and wish to see the Book Week pieces along with our other materials in full color, you may request a copy of our brochure. Just send a 6" x 9" self-addressed, stamped (2 oz. first class) envelope to: Children's Book Council, Attn: Materials Brochure, 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.



William Joyce; photo by Neil Johnson Photography

WILLIAM JOYCE: "I have always wanted to do the Book Week poster—I mean, since I was a kid. Back then everybody else wanted to be adventurers, astronauts, mad scientists. Some of those kids, I'm sure, grew up to do some of these things. With this poster, I've grown up to do them all. It was a blast. Thanks for asking me."

Joyce's poster cleverly features a family of aliens, who have landed their spaceship at a school playground, and are happily exchanging books with a group of children.

Bill Joyce's most recent books are *BENTLY & EGG* and, coming this fall, *SANTA CALLS*, both published by HarperCollins. He is currently at work as a writer, producer, director, and designer on several motion pictures for Walt Disney Studios, Columbia Pictures, and Twentieth Century-Fox.

LANE SMITH:

"Mr. Birdy likes to read.

Mr. Birdy likes to share the adventure of reading.

Ms. Croc prefers to eat.

Ms. Croc prefers to eat little fish and rabbits and birds!

Is Mr. Birdy going to read a rousing swash-buckler story or high-spirited yarn that's going to get Ms. Croc all worked up?

No! How about a nice quiet book on the joy of eating apples and leaves and vegetables?

Anyone can share the adventure of a book!"

Smith has humorously captured the spirit of the theme with his frieze illustration of a little red bird reading atop the nose of a giant crocodile.

Lane Smith illustrated the 1993 Caldecott Honor Book *THE STINKY CHEESE MAN AND OTHER FAIRLY STUPID TALES* (Viking), written by Jon Scieszka. Smith's latest project is *THE HAPPY HOCKY FAMILY*, a book honoring the color-separated-by-hand picture books of the '30s, '40s, and '50s. Designed by Molly Leach, who also worked on *STINKY CHEESE*, this will be a 64-page book printed on brown recycled paper, to be published by Viking.



Lane Smith

LISA CAMPBELL ERNST: "As our world seemingly becomes smaller and smaller, the idea of sharing with others becomes all the more important. The *spirit* of a great book, that can reach out and touch your heart and soul, is a universal one. What more magical thing to share, than that sense of adventure unique to books?"

Ernst's imaginative streamer shows a group of young children linked together by books to form a human chain around the world.

Lisa Campbell Ernst's latest works are *SQUIRREL PARK*, and *THE LUCKIEST KID ON THE PLANET*, forthcoming in the fall of 1994. Both are Bradbury Press books.



Lisa Campbell Ernst

JEAN AND MOU-SIEN TSENG: "Dancing a dragon needs teamwork to share the adventure, just as reading a book is sharing the adventure with author and illustrator."

The Tsengs' animated streamer depicts a group of children running joyously through the pages of a book while holding aloft a colorful paper dragon.

Jean and Mou-sien Tseng's current projects include *WHY DUCKS SLEEP ON ONE LEG* (Scholastic), and *SATO AND THE ELEPHANT* (Lothrop).



Fred and Pat McKissack

PATRICIA AND FREDRICK MCKISSACK: "Writing the poem to be used on the CBC bookmark for '93 Book Week was an adventure. We are accustomed to sharing the responsibilities of writing, but poetry was a new experience. We chose haiku because it has the precision of history (which made Fred comfortable) and the beauty of prose (which Pat enjoyed). For us, haiku was an exciting way to invite readers to share different reading experiences for a lifetime of adventure and discovery."

The McKissacks' poem, written in the traditional haiku form of three lines and 17 syllables, extols the virtues of reading, sharing, and keeping an open mind.

Pat and Fred McKissack have written numerous books over the years. Pat's most recent is the 1993 Newbery Honor Book *THE DARK-THIRTY: SOUTHERN TALES OF THE SUPERNATURAL* (Viking), illustrated by Brian Pinkney. Together, Pat and Fred's latest ventures are *BOOKER T. WASHINGTON: LEADER AND EDUCATOR*, and *JESSE OWENS: OLYMPIC STAR*, both published by Enslow.



Jean and Mou-sien Tseng, photographed by a temple at Inner Mogol

The Children's Book Council recently produced a limited number of T-shirts for its members, using William Joyce's 1993 Book Week poster art on the front, and the words Children's Book Council on the back. The T-shirts are good quality white cotton, and we have only a few left. If you would like one, please specify adult L or XL, and send a check or money order for \$16.00 plus \$3.50 postage and handling to: Children's Book Council, Order Center, 350 Scotland Road, Orange, NJ 07050.

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