

# New kids' titles make great gift ideas

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SPECIAL WRITER

Want to make this final Christmas of the century truly memorable for the special youngster on your list? Any of the following books will prove to be a gift that continues giving, even as we move into the next millennium:

"Sector 7," by David Wiesner (Clarion Books, \$16).

This enchanting picture book by the author/illustrator of "June 29, 1999" contains not a single word of text, but is nonetheless an extraordinary literary experience. Ever engaging, sometimes comical, and ultimately moving, "Sector 7" shows us an imaginative schoolboy who, on a "field trip" with his class visits the Empire State Building's observation deck. There, he meets a companionable cumulus who whisks him away to Sector 7, a magical place in the sky where clouds are designed and manufactured.

The concluding scenes of this book are truly exceptional both in themselves and in how they are exquisitely linked to the preceding pages.

"Knock at a Star A Child's Introduction to Poetry," by X.J. Kennedy and Dorothy M. Kennedy; illustrated by Karen Lee Baker (Little, Brown and Co., \$10.95).

This newly-revised edition of "Knock at a Star" is all about the delights of words and

wordplay. In sections titled "What Do Poems Do?" "What's Inside a Poem?" "Special Kinds of Poetry," and "Do It Yourself," kids can enjoy becoming better versed with verse.

From anonymously written nonsense rhymes to the works of such greats as John Updike, William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost, Michigan's Theodore Roethke, and many more, this well-organized anthology more than lives up to its subtitle. Best of all, it's a book the entire family can savor together.

"The Very Noisy Night," by Diana Hendry; illustrated by Jane Chapman (Dutton, \$16.99).

Little Mouse is trying to be brave, but the wind is making a frightful racket. Ditto for that spooky old owl, and a "burglar" bent on breaking into the tiny mouse house (said "burglar" is a tree limb, scratching at a window). Big Mouse ultimately succeeds in providing just the right touch of cozy comfort, however, and all ends happily in this charming bedtime mouse tale.

There's definitely nothing mousy about Chapman's artwork. It's as colorful and fun to look at as your granny's crazy quilt.

"Here Comes Mother Goose," edited by Iona Opie; illustrated by Rosemary Wells (Candlewick Press, \$21.99).

In this fat volume, Wells' lively artwork adds new punch and pizzazz to such classic favorites as "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary,"

"Pease Porridge Hot," "As I Was Going to St. Ives," and "Bobby Shaftoe."

Some verses — such as "What Are Little Girls Made of?" — have been freshened with a contemporary twist. Throughout, the zany cast of characters is headed up by dozens of our furred and feathered friends. Ducks, chicks, hamsters, kittens, bunnies, and (of course) geese abound.

"The Gargoyle on the Roof," by Jack Prelutsky; illustrated by Peter Sis (Greenwillow Books, \$16).

Though tiny tots may be spooked (especially at bedtime), older kids will probably find this inventive collection a spine-tingling, rib-tickling delight. In verses like "Mother Gargoyle's Lullaby," "Bugaboo," "My Sister is a Werewolf," and "A Vampire Speaks of Grooming," Prelutsky displays his wonderful way with weird. Sis' oddly tinted illustrations add yet another turn to the bizarre bill, and hit the spot precisely.

"The Birchbark House," by Louise Erdrich (Hyperion, \$14.99).

A National Book Award finalist, "The Birchbark House" tells the engrossing story of an Ojibwa girl growing up in the Lake Superior region in the mid-19th century.

For the legions who enjoyed Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House on the Prairie," this book may hold special appeal. It is Erdrich's ("Love Medicine") first novel for young readers.

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## Special books provide lifetime of enrichment

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

You know what is even before you tear off the rectangular wrapping, but a book still is one of the most rewarding gifts to receive, and to give:

**For grown-up minds**

You won't find any pretty postcard photos of Europe and Great Britain in "Brandt: The Photography of Bill Brandt" (Abrams, \$76 hardcover), by Bill Jay and Nigel Warburton. Brandt's black-and-white pictures make a grittier, less opulent, but still robust portrait of the Europeans and especially the British.

The pictures capture the contrasts of rich and poor and peace and war through the 1930s and 1940s.

Houses where the noted or notorious once lived are fascinating because what they reveal about their former inhabitants. "If This House Could Talk..." (Simon & Schuster, \$35 hardcover), by Elizabeth Smith Brownstein, is a tour in print of such places as a Lower East Side tenement in New York City; Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill Cottage in Hyde Park, N.Y.; William Randolph Hearst's fabulous estate at San Simeon, Calif.; and Abraham Lincoln's house in Springfield, Ill., among others.

"Chronicle of the Old Testament Kings" (Thames & Hudson, \$34.95 hardcover), by John Rogerson, covers 1,500 years of history of the leaders of Israel, from the Ancestors through the united monarchy under David and Solomon, the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the rule of Persia and Greece, and ultimately, Roman domination.

"I'll Be Home for Christmas" was the title of a favorite sentimental tune of the World War II years and also is title of a new book (Delacorte Press, \$24 hardcover) showcasing pictures of the era, from the archives of the Library of Congress.

They show not only American soldiers celebrating the holiday while serving abroad but people on the homefront, including Japanese-Americans who were interned during the war.

"A Treasury of African-American Christmas Stories, Volume II" (Henry Holt, \$20 hardcover), collected by Betty Collier-Thomas, continues the re-discovery of long-forgotten stories and poems once published in black newspapers and journals.

**For the young in age, outlook**

"It's The Ultimate LEGO Book" (DK Publishing, \$19.95 hardcover), tells how these additive plastic bricks have fascinated children and adults alike.

The book shows how these simple toys have been made into fabulous sculptures and constructions and gives you ideas for creating your own.

The youngest opera fans will appreciate performances

more with "The Barefoot Book of Stories from the Opera" (Barefoot Books, \$19.95 hardcover). Seven operas, including Benjamin Britten's "The Little Sweep," Richard Wagner's "The

Flying Dutchman" and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "The Magic Flute" are retold by Shahrukh Hussain, with illustrations by James Mayhew.

"The Ballet Book" (Firefly Books, \$19.95 hardcover, \$12.95 paperback) is the classical ballet guide from the National Ballet School of Canada.

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