FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ELIZABETH YATES TO CHILDREN'S
AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

Book selection is one of the major professional responsibilities of any librarian but especially of the librarian who works with children and young people. Those who accept this responsibility should accept also the obligation to prepare themselves as fully as possible for discharging the task well. In order to choose wisely from the great volume of publications for young people the librarian must herself read widely. She must build up an acquaintance with hundreds of authors and titles, learning the values and limitations of each, striving always to choose those books that will raise the level of reading for young people to the highest possible plane.

As a step in the direction toward this knowledge of the vast field of literature for young people the writer has chosen to study the life and works of one of today's best known authors. Elizabeth Yates was selected as the subject of this study because of the high standards she sets for herself. Her books, which are carefully and thoughtfully written, appeal only to the sensitive, mature young person

1Elizabeth Hodges, (Editorial), School Libraries, VI (March, 1957), 23.
who is concerned with the best kinds of human experience.\(^1\)

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief sketch of the life of Elizabeth Yates, bringing out those incidents and experiences that affected her professional career; to summarize the contemporary criticism of her work as to her ability as an author for children and young people; and to assemble a bibliography of her contributions to literature.

Miss Yates has written thirty books for children and young people, all of which are listed in the bibliography at the end of the paper. As the books cover such a wide age range in appeal and vocabulary, it was decided to limit the study to those books intended for ages ten through eighteen, omitting those publications for children of the primary grades and those for adults.

In the preparation of this paper all available books and articles written by Miss Yates as well as articles written about her were carefully read. For the purpose of finding biographical information such tools as the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Biography Index, Library Literature, and Essay and General Literature Index were very helpful as was the Cumulative Book Index and Books in Print for the location of Miss Yates' publications. In the evaluation of her books for young people such services as the Book Review Digest, the Children's Catalog and the Standard Catalog for High School Libraries proved most useful.

\(^1\)James C. MacCampbell, "Work of Elizabeth Yates," Elementary English, XXIX (November, 1952), 351.
The first section of the paper deals with some of the outstanding events of the life of Elizabeth Yates which are related to the publication and recognition of her writings. The second section gives an appraisal of her work as expressed in reviews at the time of publication. The paper concludes with the listing of all works of Miss Yates, all references to her work, and a list of general reference consulted.
CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH YATES

Mary Elizabeth Yates was born on December 6, 1905, in Buffalo, New York, the daughter of Mary Teresa (Duffy) and Harry Yates.1 Of English and Irish ancestry, Miss Yates well may have inherited some of the traits attributed to her forebears. Her paternal grandfather, Arthur Yates, was in the mining and shipping business and was known as a man with the ability to systematize his affairs in order to accomplish great things with the least expenditure of time and money2 while her maternal grandfather, Walter Duffy, was noted as a student of world conditions and lover of art.3 In Miss Yates we see a combination of these ancestors for, with all her love of the beautiful and the aesthetic, she is, nevertheless, an extremely practical person who performs her many and varied tasks thoroughly but expeditiously.

During her childhood her time was divided between Buffalo, where she attended school in the winters, and a

1 National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Current Volume H, 1947-1952 (New York: James T. White, 1952), p. 234. (Hereafter this set will be referred to as NCAB.)
2 NCAB, Vol. XXVIII, p. 263.
3 NCAB, Vol. XXIII, p. 238.
many acred farm south of the city where she spent her summers. Recalling these childhood days Miss Yates states that she remembers with pleasure the work and the play of those summers—the companionship of her four brothers and two sisters; the horses, dogs, and other friendly creatures of the farm; the tasks assigned to each child; the reading aloud by her father or mother in the evening; and the plays, written by an older sister, in which they all acted. "But best of all," she comments further, "I loved the days when I went off alone on my horse with a sandwich in my pocket and the knowledge that any fresh flowing stream would give us both drink."

These journeys on her horse, Bluemouse, gave Elizabeth or Betty as she was called by her family time to think of stories about the people she saw working in the field, the houses she passed or about her horse and herself. Later, on rainy days or at free moments Elizabeth would go to an unused pigeon loft which she had acquired by eminent domain and here, in a series of copy books, she would write down the stories, thoughts or poems that had begun to take form.

In addition to furnishing material for stories, Betty's journeys on Bluemouse also brought her spiritual values for, Miss Yates said,

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2Ibid., pp. 269-270.
I knew that I was in the world, yet another world was within me. In one world I was subservient to the Creator, in the other I was the creator. It was a stimulating thought. It gave me an awareness of God as a Friend with whom I could converse freely; an awareness which has only deepened as the years have gone on.

Along with these hours of leisure and play there were tasks for each child—butter making, caring for the animals, and gardening. Each of the Yates children had his own piece of land in which to plant a garden and Betty’s later aptitude for cultivating plants no doubt grew out of this early experience.

Elizabeth Yates has described herself as being a very plain little girl with brown hair and long legs and very, very shy. Because of this shyness she often turned to books as her most understanding friends. Commenting on her early reading habits, Miss Yates says that she read “everything at hand” and that she looked forward to Friday nights for then there was no homework to be done and she was permitted to read the book of her choice. Or this period she speaks with nostalgia.

A child was fortunate then, for those were the days when beds had valances. I could drag a book under a bed with me and read for hours undisturbed, vulnerable only to a dust mop or a carpet sweeper. I can remember the safe but wicked joy I felt when I heard my name being called all over the house.

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1Ibid., p. 270.


especially if my nose was buried in Oliver Twist or At the Back of the North Wind, which I had heard my mother say was too old for me.¹

During this formative period Elizabeth began to read the classics, following an outline made for her by one of her older sisters. She often combined her reading with the task of butter making for, she comments, the old fashioned churn required only one hand for the job and little mental effort. During one summer, she states, all of Dickens’ books were read as she held a book in one hand and worked the churn with the other.²

Elizabeth’s school days were happy ones. When she became of kindergarten age, she was enrolled in the Franklin School in Buffalo, which she attended through the twelfth grade.³ Recalling these years, Miss Yates remarked,

In school we had prizes for odd and useful accomplishments. My greatest joy was when my crisp loaf of bread submitted in the bread-making contest won first prize, a three-volume set of Les Miserables. There were other prizes for doing up packages and for sharpening pencils. One most coveted prize was a cake of pink soap to the girl who could go for a whole year without a single misspelled word in any class. In my senior year I was able to wash my face with the pink soap.⁴

Her principal at the Franklin School is remembered as being a

⁴Ferris, loc. cit.
"wise and inspired" person "who put special emphasis on the classics and English literature." In speaking of her classes, Miss Yates mentions the fact that she "had the comfort of consistent excellence in anything having to do with English" and attributed this to her love for the look and sound of words.

In her last year of high school, Betty received the grade of A on an essay on Browning which served as an impetus for further writing. Of this paper Elizabeth later remarked,

Underneath the A my teacher had written, "a delightful paper to read." That was my first real thrill in the world of letters... The mark meant only that my facts were correct, that most of my commas were in the right places, and that no words were misspelled; but that my work had been a delight to read—that was something to feel excited about! I had a feeling that for once words had bent to my desire. I glimpsed something then that I was to see even more clearly—that the writer only commences; it is the reader who completes.

After a year at the Oaksmere boarding school in Mararoneck, New York, and a summer abroad, Betty announced to her parents that she wished to go to New York to become a writer. Her parents, understandably, had other plans for her, for "writers were not entirely unreprensible and there

1 Kunitz and Haycraft, op. cit., p. 304.
3 Ibid., p. 269.
was so much else [that she] might do that would be more certain of success." In response to her announcement, her father remarked, "After all, you're only twenty. How do you know you can be a writer?" Commenting on this incident, Miss Yates stated,

I tried to persuade them, but what assurance could I offer of getting anywhere in this chosen field? I thought of stories I had read of people who had to prove themselves in their own way. I even mentioned Byron as some sort of definitive inducement. I can hear my mother's voice today as clearly as it sounded then, 'But, Betty, you are not Lord Byron!'

She finally convinced her parents that she should leave home and in 1926, went to New York and for three years was employed in various jobs; first at the Frankel Galleries, later as a comparison shopper with R. H. Macy Company and always as a free lance writer. Her love of horses and riding she indulged by working during the summers as a riding instructor at a girl's camp.

As far as her writing was concerned, these three years were years of apprenticeship for Miss Yates. Her first publication was a poem, which appeared in 1926, in the "Conning Tower," a newspaper column edited by Franklin Pierce Adams for the New York World. During this time, Miss Yates wrote newspaper stories, magazine articles, book

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3Ibid.
reviews, and short stories and was engaged in some research. She tried to follow the advice of a friend who had said, "Write something every day. It doesn't matter now so much what you write as that you write."¹

While working in New York, Elizabeth met William McGreal, a business executive whom she married on November 6, 1929. Her husband's business was in London and here they maintained their headquarters but there was much opportunity for travel and the McGreals visited France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Iceland. In commenting on this period Miss Yates remarks that these travels were "highlighted by mountain climbing and meeting interesting people." She states further that they were fortunate in being able to remain in these countries "long enough for the landscape and the people to become dear and familiar."²

Between her visits to the Continent, Miss Yates did editorial work for the Oxford University Press.³ This employment, however, did not keep her from personal writing for she spent long hours in the British Museum and the London Library, never forgetting the advice of her friend who had suggested that she "write something every day."⁴

²Kunitz and Haycraft, *op. cit.*, p. 304.
⁴Kunitz and Haycraft, *op. cit.*, p. 304.
Mountain Born, published in 1943, Once in the Year, 1947, and A Place for Peter, 1952, three stories concerning the same characters, are full of beautiful descriptions of the New England countryside. The reader can sense her deep appreciation for the changing scenery of New England as well as her love of animals.

Her interest in spiritual matters is seen in her collections of Bible stories and prayers and stories with religious themes. The first of these, Joseph, the King James Version of a Well-Loved Tale was published in 1947 under the imprint of Knopf. Since that date, The Christmas Story, published by Aladdin in 1949, Children of the Bible, Aladdin, 1950, and Your Prayers and Mine, Houghton Mifflin, 1952, have made their appearance.

Miss Yates' sensitiveness to and love for people is brought out in the characters of her novels. She has written four stories for adults, all published by Coward-McCann: Wind of Spring, 1945, the story of Susie Minton, an English maidservant, and her experiences while living through three wars; Beloved Bondage, 1948, which tells of the married life, with its accompanying problems, of a young furniture salesman and a daughter of a wealthy family; Brave Interval, 1952, the experiences of five people as they take a pack trip through the Smoky Mountains; and The Carey Girl, 1956, the story of Kit Carey, the daughter of divorced parents, who is disappointed in love and finally commits suicide. Miss Yates' novels for young people that reflect her interest in people
are: **Nearby**, Coward-McCann, 1947, the story of a young New England teacher; and **Guardian Heart**, Coward-McCann, 1952, a tender love story of a New England Mountain girl and a playboy of the New England Valley. Miss Yates' "particular gift is that of quiet penetration into character" and nowhere is this seen more clearly than in her novels.

As has been stated, Elizabeth Yates is interested in all mankind. There seems, however, to be a special concern for minority groups and people of other countries and races. Evidence for this is seen in her stories: **The Young Traveller in the U. S. A.**, Phenix Press, 1948; **Rainbow Round the World, A Story of UNICEF**, Bobbs-Merrill, 1954, and two biographies: **Amos Fortune, Free Man**, 1951, and **Prudence Crandall, Woman of Courage**, 1955, both published by Aladdin. **Amos Fortune, Free Man**, the true story of a Negro man who was loved and respected by both races and whose life made a profound imprint upon his community of Jaffrey, New Hampshire, is perhaps Miss Yates' best known and most popular book. It was given three literary awards: the **New York Herald Tribune Spring Festival Award**, 1951; the **John Newbery Medal**, 1951, an award given each year by the Children's Division of the American Library Association for the "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children" for the previous calendar year; and the **William Allen White Children's Book Award**, 1953, an award sponsored by the Library of the Kansas State Teachers College.

of Emporia, Kansas. This latter award, named for a distinguished editor and author of Emporia, is unique in that the book chosen for this honor is selected by school children instead of by adults.\(^1\) Prudence Crandall, Miss Yates' other biography tells the life of a young Quaker teacher who set up a school for Negro girls in spite of the opposition of her fellow townsmen.

In addition to the books mentioned, Miss Yates has written many articles and book reviews. In speaking of her writing habits, her husband reveals that all her composing is done first in longhand on legal size paper and then revised in such a thorough way that changes are seldom made after the script is typed. Her manuscript reaches the editor's desk in such neat and orderly fashion, that often page-proof rather than galley proof is set up directly from it.\(^2\)

Although Mrs. McGreal's primary interest are her home and her writing, she takes time off each summer for teaching. She has taught writing for children at the University of Indiana, the University of Connecticut and, since 1948, at the University of New Hampshire.\(^3\) Concerning her teaching ability her husband proudly states,


\(^2\) McGreal, *loc. cit.*, p. 266.

both the Conference staff and a number of the students have told me enthusiastically of Elizabeth's course and its gratifying results. Long after the Conference has ended, she continues to work with many of the students, helping to get their manuscripts into shape and assisting in finding markets for them. Here her characteristic enthusiasm and confidence plays an important part. Eagerly she makes every effort to help others reach their own goals.1

In appearance, Elizabeth has been described by her husband, as being "tall and slender" with "a stout heart and a strong body" and hair as "brown as her eyes." He further adds that among the first qualities he saw in his future wife were "a love of mankind and nature; a zest for the outdoors and high places; a courage and stamina; a striving and searching."2 Mrs. Lillian Bragdon, Children's editor of the Aladdin Book Company, remarked that on her first meeting with Miss Yates "her fresh, heart-warming personality made me forget everything but the fact that here was a truly serene, content, and happy person." She further adds that "one is impressed with her vitality, her quick, sympathetic understanding, and her intense interest in all that goes on about her."3

Miss Yates is noted for her resourcefulness and courage. Her husband recalls a time when she met a crisis in their lives with great steadfastness and faith—that was in 1943 when Mr. McGreal lost his sight.

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1 McGreal, loc. cit., p. 264.
2 Ibid., p. 263.
3 Bragdon, loc. cit.
Not once did Elizabeth falter. There was no tragedy, no defeat. Though the adjustment seemed so very slow at first, I gained hope and confidence as I felt her close companionship, her strong hand in mine and her unconquerable spirit. Quietly and swiftly she took over tasks I had formerly done around the place, brought in the firewood, mowed the lawn, even swung the scythe. It became her pleasure to do all the evening's reading aloud. It was her fortitude and philosophy that continue to strengthen and sustain. Now that the inner vision is clearer and I am again enjoying a sense of usefulness and activity, I can cherish even more the stout heart, the hand that became my hand and the sight that became my sight.  

With this help from his wife, Mr. McGreal adjusted to his handicap and later became executive secretary for the New Hampshire Association for the Blind.  

Thus we may see that Elizabeth Yates McGreal is a person of wide interests. On the literary side she has her writing and teaching, supported by a great love for reading. She states that she still reads her favorites of her earlier days—Thebetane, Blake, Hardy, and George Eliot but finds great satisfaction, also, in her Bible. On the domestic side we see her preparing meals, canning fruits and vegetables and sewing. She enjoys creating things with her hands as is evidenced by the needle point chair seats, copies of tapestries in the Cluny Museum in Paris, which she made for her dining room chairs. She also finds time to raise dogs.

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2 Yates, Publisher's Weekly, March 10, 1941, p. 1256.  
3 Kunitz and Haycraft, op. cit., p. 304.  
4 McGreal, loc. cit., p. 266.  
5 Bragdon, loc. cit.
During this time Elizabeth wrote book reviews and articles as well as forewords to two books published by her husband. These were children's books entitled *First Friends, A Picture Book of Photographs for Babies*, 1938, and *First Animal Friends*, 1939, both published under the imprint of Oxford University Press.

At the same time that she was carrying out these odd writing jobs she was writing her first book. The subject of the book was inspired by a remark made by an acquaintance in London who advised Miss Yates to write about a subject that she knew a little more about than anyone else. The result of this advice was *High Holiday*, published in 1938 by Charles Black, a story that grew out of actual experiences of the McGreals when they, accompanied by three English children, spent a summer mountain-climbing in Switzerland.\(^1\)

It was also in 1938 that Mrs. McGreal through her friend, Bertha Mahony Miller, became interested in the works of Enys Tregarthen, an English woman, who had published several collections of folk tales of Cornwall. After a diligent search throughout England, the McGreals discovered that Miss Tregarthen, whose real name was Nellie Slogget,\(^2\) had at her death left a chest of unpublished material in the attic of her home. Although these tales, gathered by Miss Tregarthen from visitors while she was an invalid, were on

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musty, yellowish paper and in faded handwriting, the McGreals
felt that they would still delight children and lovers of
folklore alike. From this material "Miss Yates edited and
published several books, the first of which was Piskey Folk,
A Book of Cornish Legends appearing under the imprint of the
John Day Company in 1940. This collection of thirteen tales
of the Piskies or Little Folk of Cornwall was illustrated
with photographs by William McGreal of the "wild beautiful
Cornish country." The McGreals thought that since the
Piskies were invisible, photographs of the countryside where
they frolicked would be the most suitable illustrations to
use. Other materials gathered from this same source ap-
ppeared later as The Doll Who Came Alive, published by John

While in England Miss Yates edited a book of George
McDonald's poems, to which she added a biographical sketch
and published in 1938, under the title of Gathering Grace;
A Short Selection of Poems. During the next year Elizabeth
published Hans and Frieda in the Swiss Mountains and Climbing
Higher, An Iceland Adventure, the former under the imprint of
Nelson and Sons of New York and the latter published by
Charles Black of London. The illustrator for Hans and Frieda
in the Swiss Mountains was Nora Spicer Chwin, an English

1Elizabeth Yates, "How Enys Tregarthen's Cornish
Legends Came to Life," The Horn Book Magazine, XVI (Septem-
ber, 1940), 334.

2Ibid.
friend, who later moved to the United States to become a
neighbor of Mrs. McGreal in Peterborough, New Hampshire. 1
Miss Unwin, an outstanding illustrator in wood engravings,
evoked this remark from Miss Yates: [Nora] "has great tenderness with animals, and she meets children on an equal footing
that makes them love her and pose readily for her." 2 The two
women, both loving animals and children, were to create many
books together.

Miss Yates' next four juvenile books, Quest in the
Northland, An Iceland Adventure in 1940, Haven for the Brave
in 1941, both published by Knopf, Under the Little Fir and
Other Stories, by Coward-McCann, in 1942, and Around the Year
In Iceland by Heath in 1942, were to take their setting from
Europe, although by that time the McGreals were living in the
United States.

Returning to the States in the late fall of 1939, the
McGreals settled just outside of Peterborough, New Hampshire.
The farm, which they bought, consisted of 60 acres of cleared
fields and deep woods and a stout little farmhouse. 3 Miss
Yates called their farm Shieling, a name which is of Scotch
origin and "means a little house in a clearing--a protected

1Elizabeth Yates, "Portrait of An Artist," The Horn
Book Magazine, XXVI (March, 1950), 141.
2Ibid., p. 140.
3William McGreal, "Elizabeth Yates," The Horn Book
Magazine, XXVII (July, 1951), 267.
place where one may be shielded from the weather, and here the McGreals have a home that is adapted to their needs. Shieling was once a productive dairy farm and it is the dream of the McGreals that someday the Shieling acres will be restored to their former purpose. Today they are "content to have a neighbor's flock of sheep in the knoll pasture; a few hens, puppies, hay, cordwood, and a bountiful supply of vegetables, fruit, and flowers." The farmhouse, which is over one hundred and twenty-five years old, has been restored and in the process fireplaces were opened, windows changed and new doors made. While the remodeling was in progress, plaster fell from a bedroom wall revealing traces of early stenciling. Laboriously the plaster and several layers of wall paper were removed from the walls of this room in order that the beauty of the early stencils which consisted of floral design with colors of moss green and brick red and little hearts tucked between the leaves might be enjoyed again. This pattern, as Miss Yates was later to discover, indicated that the house was first built for a bride. Looking for more stenciling, the McGreals found in the front hall the traditional hospitality pattern—that of pineapples on a bright yellow background.

Interest aroused by these discoveries was heightened

1Bragdon, loc. cit.
2Ibid.
3Elizabeth Yates, "We Found Patterns on Our Walls!" American Home, XXX (October, 1943), 31.
when Elizabeth found in the possession of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in Boston the stenciling kit of Moses Eaton, an early journeyman stenciler of the New Hampshire area. In this kit were the same stencils with traces of paint still around their edges that had been used in making the designs on the walls of the McGreal home.  

This event led to further research of the earlier journeyman stencilers, their lives and their work, and gave inspiration for Miss Yates' next book, *Patterns on the wall*, published under the imprint of Knopf in 1943, which was selected as a prize book in the *New York Herald Tribune* Spring Book Section of 1943. *Hue and Cry*, which appeared in 1953 as a Coward-McCann publication, was a sequel to *Patterns on the Wall*, using the same characters and setting.

Close by the lovely old farmhouse was an ice house which the McGreals remodeled and made into a workroom for Elizabeth. With the addition of windows and a chimney this made a pleasant place to write and it is here that she works undisturbed during the morning hours. Her afternoons are spent in various household tasks, entertaining friends, or indulging in her favorite sports—swimming or mountain climbing.  

Elizabeth Yates is a person with many and varied interests, many of which are reflected in her works. Her intense love of nature is seen in many of her books.

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2 *Bradgon, loc. cit.*  
and travel, though the later now consists of occasional trips to Boston and New York or brief vacations at the seashore or in the mountains. Concerning her way of life Miss Yates has made the following statement: "It is a quiet life we lead and in it there is time to think—time to enjoy the things that have always meant much: friends, books and the countryside."^2

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^1 Kunitz, op. cit., p. 1114.

^2 Ibid.
CHAPTER II

A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE BOOKS WRITTEN BY
ELIZABETH YATES FOR AGES 10-18

In Chapter I the outstanding events in the life of Elizabeth Yates were presented including her education, travels and professional achievements. In this chapter the works of Miss Yates will be surveyed, giving a brief summary of each book and a critical commentary as expressed through reviews of the book at the time of publication. The Book Review Digest was the source used to locate reviews.

Elizabeth Yates is one of the most versatile of contemporary writers for children and young people. It is most unusual for an author to write equally as well for the child in primary grades and the middle years as she does for the teenager but it would seem that Miss Yates has that gift. She "is able to appeal to the very young child with his need for images and concrete expression; the teenage youngster whose reading tastes are so volatile; and to the young adult whose taste in literature is becoming increasingly sophisticated."¹ This does not imply, however, that her books will appeal to all children or all young people for Miss Yates

¹MacCampbell, loc. cit., p. 361.
writings are "filled with philosophical understandings, with beautiful imagery, and with carefully worked out dialogue which will be interesting only to young people for whom reading is a challenge."¹

This paper is concerned only with those 17 books of Elizabeth Yates that are written for young people from ages 10-18. The books will be considered in three groups: those books of interest to ages 10-12; those written for ages 12-14; and those written for ages 15-18.

Books for Ages 10-12

For this age level Elizabeth Yates has written three books and edited two others. They may be divided into three groups according to subject matter: Folk Tales, Fiction and Religion.

Folk Tales

Under the heading Folk Tales falls an unusual collection of Cornish legends written many years ago by Enys Tregarthen and now edited by Elizabeth Yates. Piskey Folk, published by John Day Company in 1940, is a collection of 13 tales selected by Miss Yates from a little trunk filled with scrapbooks, letters, and stories by Enys Tregarthen, to which she was given access by a relative of Miss Tregarthen. Piskey Folk, illustrated with photographs by William McGreal, includes tales of the Piskeys or small...
fairy folk who inhabit "the windswept moors, the rugged hills, the quiet harbors and the ragged cliffs, the small villages and the neat cottages, the downs green and sweet with thyme" of Cornwall, England.¹

Critics were unanimous in welcoming this collection of Cornish tales as a valuable addition to English folklore. The stories were described as "fresh and interesting with an outdoor atmosphere suggestive of the Cornish country."² Anne Carroll Moore praised the variety and humor found in the collection³ while Ruth Hill Viguers thought the tales were exquisite and warmly written with the "power to spirit the reader very quickly into the piskey world."⁴ The only point on which critics disagreed was in regard to the photographs. Anne Eaton thought the photographs were very lovely⁵ but Claire Nolte felt that they detracted "from the atmosphere of other worldliness built up by the stories" and that "delicate line drawings would have been more suitable."⁶

Piskey Folk appeared in the 1941, 1946, and 1950 editions of the Children's Catalog, a publication of the

²New York Times Book Review, September 1, 1940, p. 11.
³The Horn Book Magazine, XVI (September, 1940), 339.
⁴Library Journal, October 15, 1940, p. 848.
⁵New York Times Book Review, September 1, 1940, p. 11.
⁶Library Journal, October 1, 1940, p. 314.
H. W. Wilson Company which lists recommended books for children from pre-school age through the ninth grade.

**Fiction**

The two books of fiction for this age level, *Mountain Born* and *A Place for Peter*, are two stories about the same characters. *Mountain Born*, published by Coward-McCann in 1943, is the story of Peter, a young boy who lives with his parents on a New Hampshire sheep farm and of his sheep Biddy which he has raised from a small lamb. Peter is seen as well as the sheep, growing and maturing. He learns to take responsibility, to help his father on the farm, and, when Biddy dies, he learns that he must accept with equal grace the sorrows as well as the joys that come to him.

Reviewers gave high praise to this ageless and timeless story of the New England countryside. The author was commended for "quiet, lovely, carefully descriptive language which makes the reader feel the soft wind of spring and the hot sun of summer."¹ The story was described as "a little boy's development into a helpful, valued member of his home life"² and was praised for its realism and for its background of warm human relations.³ All critics agreed that *Mountain Born*, which portrays so well Miss Yates' love of nature, would be excellent for reading aloud.

¹ *MacCampbell, loc. cit.*, p. 385.
³ *Booklist*, December 1, 1943, p. 118.
The Children's Catalog listed *Mountain Born* in the 1946, 1951, and 1956 editions. In the 1946 edition it carried a double star or asterisk, denoting very exceptional worth; in the 1951 and 1956 editions it was marked with a single star as especially recommended.

In 1952 *A Place for Peter*, a sequel to *Mountain Born*, was published by Coward-McCann. Again is depicted Peter and his family and again is presented life on a farm in the beautiful New England countryside. Peter who is now in his early teens, resents the fact that his father gives him only the simple, routine chores to do and does not trust him with the tasks carrying great responsibility. When an emergency arises Peter proves that he is worthy of trust and is at last accepted by his father as a partner in the operation of the farm.

Only favorable reviews of this book appeared in current periodicals. Critics acclaimed it as a "warm and friendly story of high resolve and human shortcomings which leaves an appreciation of real values for young readers." As in *Mountain Born* the realism of farm life was praised. Jennie Lindquist stated that Miss Yates is usually "at her best when describing life in the country, the animals and the changing year" and further commented that "perhaps because she loves it all so much herself--Peter’s experiences with the many emergencies life on a farm can bring, ring

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true." It was observed further by several reviewers that the special appeal of this book would be to those young boys of Peter's age who would be facing the same problems that confronted Peter.

*Place for Peter* was listed in the 1956 edition of the *Children's Catalog*.

**Religion**

Two books with a religious emphasis have been written for this age group by Miss Yates: *Joseph and Once in the Year*. *Joseph, the King James Version of a Well-Loved Tale* which was edited by Miss Yates and published by Knopf in 1947, presents the story of Joseph and his brothers in chronological fashion using the wording of the Bible as recorded in Genesis but omitting irrelevant parts. An excellent and illuminating introduction by Miss Yates gives her interpretation of this familiar story and clarifies the sequence of events.

Both the arrangement of material and Miss Yates' foreword were praised by all reviewers. One critic remarked that the introduction "is bound to lead one to pause in reading, turn his thoughts within and relate something in Joseph's life to something in his own." The facts that the words of the Bible were used, and that irrelevant parts

were left out give the account both clarity and continuity in the opinion of Alice Jordan who further comments that "the greatness of the tale itself will be more likely to speak to young people in this form than in its conventional position in the book of Genesis, interspersed with unrelated matter."\(^1\)

Joseph, the King James Version of a Well-Loved Tale appeared in both the 1956 and the 1951 issues of the Children's Catalog.

Once in the Year, A Christmas Story, Coward-McCann, 1947, is a tale within a tale. Using the same characters and setting of Mountain Born as the framework of the story, Miss Yates pictures the home of Peter on Christmas Eve as his mother tells him two beautiful Christmas legends, that of the blossoming forest and of the animals at midnight.

Reviewers felt that this was a book of exceptional beauty, with a moving story complemented by exquisite red-brown illustrations by Nora Unwin. Ruth Viguers liked the "picture of a simple, friendly home and a devout and loyal family, of a snowy hillside and a warm snug barn where the beasts are cared for"\(^2\) while Helen Kramer welcomed it as a book "especially recommended for family reading aloud."\(^3\)

Once in the Year, A Christmas Story was included in the 1951 and 1956 editions of the Children's Catalog.

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Books for Ages 12-14

Eight of Miss Yates' books fall within the age level of 12 to 14 and they, too, divide into three groups according to subject content: Biography, Fiction and Religion.

Biography

Miss Yates has written two outstanding biographies for this age group: Amos Fortune, Free Man and Prudence Crandall, Woman of Courage. Both deal with the subject of racial tolerance. One is the life of a negro who was striving for his own freedom and for the freedom of others of his race while the other is the life of a white woman of the middle 19th century who spent her life fighting slavery.

Amos Fortune, Free Man, published by Aladdin in 1950, is the story of a negro who was born as a tribal prince in Africa in the early eighteenth century, captured by slave dealers when he was fifteen years old and sold in Boston. Amos learned the tanner's trade, saved every penny he earned, and eventually bought his own freedom and that of several others. He was married three times—each time to a woman whose freedom he purchased. When he died he was a landowner and a respected citizen of Jaffrey, New Hampshire, the little town where he had lived so long and in his will the church and school of Jaffrey were beneficiaries. Amos and his beloved wife Violet are buried in the churchyard of Jaffrey and, when Miss Yates saw their tombstones, she tells us, she knew that she must write Amos' biography.
with the exception of one reviewer, critics greeted this book with enthusiasm. *Amos Fortune* was called a moving and sensitively written story underlaid with a deep religious feeling and was praised for the "epic quality of the subject." It was recommended for thoughtful young people by Ellen Buell who felt that teenagers of today would find the story absorbing and full of meaning while James MacCampbell, writing on the works of Elizabeth Yates in *Elementary English* states that *Amos Fortune, Free Man* "is truly a great piece of literature for children and undoubtedly the finest of the work of Miss Yates to date." The only adverse criticism of *Amos Fortune* was voiced by the reviewers in the *Bulletin from the Virginia Kirkus Bookshop Service* who called the book an "unpleasant, grim story, with sentimental overtones—generally unsuitable for the juvenile level."

That public reaction did not agree with this last critic was evidenced by the fact that *Amos Fortune, Free Man* won both a *New York Herald Tribune* Spring Festival Award and the American Library Association's Newbery Medal of 1951 as the most distinguished children's book published during the previous year.

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Amos Fortune, Free Man was listed in the last two editions of the Children's Catalog—single starred in 1951 and double starred in 1956. The Standard Catalog for High School Libraries, a publication of the H. W. Wilson Company, which lists recommended books for junior and senior high schools included this title, accompanied by a single star, in the 1952 edition.

The second of Miss Yates' biographies also tells the story of an individual's struggle with the institution of slavery. Prudence Crandall, Woman of Courage, published by Aladdin in 1953, concerns the life of a Quaker school-teacher in a small Connecticut town during the middle years of the nineteenth century. Prudence Crandall dared to open her "Academy for Young Ladies" to negro girls and despite persecution by the townspeople she never swerved from her purpose. When finally she was driven from Canterbury, Connecticut, she did not accept defeat but with her husband's help set up schools in other places.

Critics acclaimed this biography as a worthy companion to Amos Fortune, Free Man. It was called "a moving story, told without bitterness or recrimination but with complete sympathy for those who fought against slavery and bigotry"¹ and was recommended for young people as inspirational reading as well as for curriculum application in

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¹Saturday Review, November 12, 1955, p. 76.
history and social issues. ¹ There is value for teenagers in this story, believes Polly Goodwin, in the fact that Prudence's faith and courage, seemingly of no avail at first, did eventually bear fruit. ² Margaret Scoggin commended Prudence Crandall as a story of moral and spiritual courage but felt that it required some application and thus should be introduced to thoughtful girls who could appreciate its timely message. ³ Prudence Crandall, Woman of Courage was single starred in the Children Catalog for 1956.

**Fiction**

For this age group Miss Yates has written four books of a fictional nature: High Holiday, Miss Yates' first published book; Quest in the North-Land; Patterns on the Wall; and Rainbow Round the World. High Holiday and Quest in the North-Land concern the same group of characters: the Lamb family, consisting of the parents and their two children, Meredith and Michael, and the children's Uncle Tony. These stories might be classed as travel books as in each case the two children spend a summer traveling with their uncle. High Holiday tells of a summer in which Uncle Tony takes Meredith and Michael on a trip to Switzerland and describes their experiences, while mountain-climbing.


Only one review of this book was available. The critic of the *Horn Book Magazine* praised the story as having "a real feeling for all aspects of mountain climbing, especially, the effort, care and pains that must be put into it."\(^1\)

In *Quest in the North-Land* we find Meredith, Michael, and Uncle Tony spending a summer in Iceland, traveling through the country and getting acquainted with the people and their customs.

Criticism for the most part was favorable toward *Quest in the North-Land*. It was commended for the excellent descriptions of the country, customs and people\(^2\) but the story thread was said to be "slight" and at times lagging.\(^3\)

Very favorable comments came from Professor Halldon Hermanson, former professor at Cornell University and one of the outstanding Icelandic scholars in the United States, who stated that this was the first book about Iceland written by a foreigner that he has seen, in which every fact was absolutely correct.\(^4\) The fact that the book contained a glossary of the pronunciation of Icelandic names was pleasing to D. L. Wood of the *Library Journal* who felt that this would keep the names from being so strange to American children.\(^5\)

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\(^1\)*The Horn Book Magazine*, XV (January, 1939), 43.

\(^2\)*Library Journal*, September 15, 1940, p. 771.

\(^3\)*Ibid.*

\(^4\)This statement was taken from the book jacket for *Quest in the North-Land*.

\(^5\)*Library Journal*, September 15, 1940, p. 771.
Patterns on the Wall, published by Knopf in 1943, takes place in the early years of the nineteenth century, when painters traveled through the New England countryside decorating the walls of houses. It is the story of Jared Austin and his experiences, first as an apprentice to a journeyman painter and later as a painter on his own. As a subordinate plot the romance of Jared and Jennet Thaxter is told, but the major portion of the book deals with the craft of these itinerant painters and the superstitions and hardships of the New England people of that period.

Critical reaction to Patterns on the Wall was, for the most part, favorable. The book was called "a novel of distinctive quality" and was said to possess delicacy and charm. Ellen L. Buell of the New York Times commended the unusual theme of the novel and the vivid scenes of New England life depicted by the author but felt that Miss Yates was "sentimental and strained in her effort to recapture the quality and significance" of the painting of these early craftsmen. She stated further that she considered Jared too "noble" a character and because of this she "doubted if many young people would really warm to him." Other critics, however, thought that the book had a wide range of interest.

1 New Yorker, May 29, 1943, p. 69.
4 Ibid.
appeal and that some young people would like it because of its history of mural painting, its story of New England farm life, or its light romance.¹

*Patterns on the Wall* was one of the award books of the *New York Herald Tribune's* Spring Festival of 1943 and was included in the *Standard Catalog for High School Libraries* for 1947.

The fourth book of Miss Yates in this category of fiction, *Rainbow Round the World, the Story of UNICEF*, is really a combination of fact and fiction. Using as a framework the story of a three week's trip around the world taken by a representative of the United Nations and John Dexter an American boy of eleven, the benefits of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to the needy children of the world are set forth. The book is written in journal form and records the experiences and impressions of John as he meets with children of other lands.

Reviewers of *Rainbow Round the World* cited points both in favor of the book and against it. The value of the book as a comprehensive interpretation of the work of the UNICEF was admitted² and the warmhearted enthusiasm and easy style of the author were commended³ but the weak story

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¹*MacCampbell, loc. cit.*, p. 382.
device and contrived situations were deplored. 1 Louise Bechtel felt that "the book wavers between purposeful lecturing and adventures on a child's level and is more propaganda than a literary success."2 She went on to say, however, that after reading this book children would "send their gifts [to UNICEF] with more understanding."3

Religion

For children of the age level 12-14, Miss Yates has edited an edition of The Christmas Story and prepared a compilation entitled Your Prayers and Mine. The Christmas Story, published by Aladdin in 1949, employs the same technique as that used in Joseph, in that the wording of the Bible is used with irrelevant verses omitted. The story is given in three parts: the Prophecies with the scriptures taken from Isaiah, the Story coming from Luke and Matthew and the Fulfillment as recorded in John and Revelations.

Miss Yates' inspirational foreword was praised by the reviewers as well as the arrangement of the story, which they felt was a logical sequence that emphasized the beauty and rhythm of the King James Version 4 and thus increased the value of the story. The Christmas Story appeared in both

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3Ibid.
4Saturday Review, December 10, 1949, p. 36.
the 1951 and the 1956 editions of the Children Catalog.

Your Prayers and Mine, published by Houghton in 1954, is "a collection of prayers taken from the Old and New Testaments, from Saint Augustine and Saint Francis, from the Rabbi Gamaliel, Socrates, and Mohammed, from ancient Gaelic runes, the Navaho Indians, and the Breton fisherman."1

All reviews of this book were laudatory. Miss Yates' introduction was cited as being both wise and beautiful2 and the compiler was praised for her "fine eye and ear for prayers that transcend time, space and differing faiths."3 The Christian Science Monitor commented that "many of the prayers have a deep spiritual content, others a moral, a few are self-revealing and one or two, although deeply sincere, are surprisingly droll."4 All of the prayers were said to reflect feelings and needs which people have shared through centuries.5 Although Your Prayers and Mine might be considered as a book for the junior high age, Virginia Haviland felt that both young people and adults would find inspiration in this graceful and reassuring little book,6 which emphasizes the

1Children Catalog, 1956, p. 11.
6The Horn Book Magazine, XXX (June, 1954), 181.
spiritual attitude of the author as observed in her other publications.¹ Your Prayers and Mine was included in the Children's Catalog for 1956 and 1956 Supplement of the Standard Catalog for High School Libraries.

Books for Ages 15-18

For this age group Miss Yates has written four novels: Haven for the Brave, Nearby, Guardian Heart and Hue and Cry. Two of these, Haven for the Brave and Hue and Cry, have characters that were introduced in previous publications.

Haven for the Brave, Knopf, 1941, continues the story of the two English Youngsters met before in High Holiday and Quest in the North-Land. The scene is laid in the early days of World War II when English parents are sending their children away from England far from the enemy bombing. Meredith and Michael spend some time in Canada and then come to the United States to remain until the end of the war.

Critical opinion of Haven for the Brave was about equally divided. On one side, May Lamberton Becker admired the high tone and the theme of the book and remarked that there was "no flag wagging, no hatred of man or nation"² expressed. Maude Adams liked the style which she described as "lively and contemplative by turn"³ while the New York Times

1 Booklist, April 15, 1954, p. 328.
3 Library Journal, September 1, 1941, p. 737.
Book Review praised the thoughtfully written story full of understanding. On the other hand, Mary R. Lucas saw nothing of value in Haven for the Brave. She found the book sentimental and propagandistic and felt that it might offend people who do not have the same point of view. Furthermore, she felt that the writing is "both too young and too sophisticated for this age group." The New York Times Book Review, thought the action of the story was frequently slowed by philosophical conversations but felt that the tone is worthy of absorption by young readers.

In Nearby, a Novel, published by Coward-McCann in 1947, Miss Yates tells the story of Mary Rowen, a young city girl who accepts a position to teach in a one room school in a small New England town called Nearby. The story is a record of her first year of teaching and of her struggles to put into effect her social and educational ideas in a town that was steeped in tradition and conservatism. By the end of the year she is accepted by the townspeople and finds personal happiness as well.

In general, critics reviewed Nearby favorably. One reviewer felt that, while Miss Yates' adult characterizations are apt to be over-idealized, her delineation of the small boy from the Swamplands is excellent. The story is described

2 Library Journal, September 1, 1941, p. 737.  
as "tender and quite charming"\(^1\) and one that offers much thoughtful reflection\(^2\) but one reviewer thought that at times the story became too didactic, thereby detracting from the effectiveness of the book.\(^3\) All reviewers, however, seemed to feel that any flaws that may exist in Nearby are minor ones and that Miss Yates is to be commended for her picture of a teacher with idealism, courage, and imagination who is able to make a village see its interrelation with the rest of the world.

Nearby is listed in the 1952 Standard Catalog for High School Libraries.

Guardian Heart, published in 1950 by Coward-McCann, centers around the love story of Freely Simon, a young country girl, and Philip Haven, the college trained son of a wealthy mill owner of a New Hampshire town. The inevitable conflicts that follow are dissolved and the story ends happily.

Critics had both favorable and unfavorable comments to make about Guardian Heart. The author's prose style was termed "distinguished, even beautiful in its simplicity"\(^4\) and her ability to "take the reader into the still and sacred

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\(^1\) Bulletin From the Virginia Kirkus Bookshop Service, July 1, 1946, p. 304.


places of the heart and make him feel at home there"¹ was praised. Also commended were the "strong characterization and a sensitive perception of nature."² On the other hand, however, M. S. Hurst thought that "virtue triumphs perhaps a little too unfailingly"³ and Lorine Pruette felt that "freely is a little too elfin, a little quaint"⁴ while the Chicago Sunday Tribune spoke of the "much used theme and rather childish writing."⁵

Guardian Heart was listed in the Standard Catalog for High School Libraries for 1952.

The list of Miss Yates' books to be discussed here is Hue and Cry, published by Coward-McCann in 1953, and continuing the story of Jared and Jennet Austin, presented previously in Patterns on the Wall. The Austin family now consists of three young people, two boys and a deaf girl, Melody, and it is Melody's story that dominates the book. She saves young Danny O'Dare from the wrath of the Hue and Cry, a voluntary organization whose purpose was to catch horse thieves and falls in love with him. While Danny is paying his debt by working in the mills in Portsmouth, New

²Chicago Sunday Tribune, October 22, 1950, p. 4.
⁵Chicago Sunday Tribune, October 22, 1950, p. 4.
Hampshire, Melody attends a school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, and after a year they meet again and are married. There was very little adverse criticism to this book. It was commended for its lively narrative, its high level of interest, and its high moral principles. It was rated as one of the author's best by the Christian Science Monitor and was acclaimed with enthusiasm by Mary Ross of the New York Herald Tribune Book Review who said:

Both the theme of this simple story, which gives scope for Miss Yates' special knowledge of and affection for horses, and its picture of people and customs in New Hampshire in 1936 make Hue and Cry an unusually appealing and enjoyable little book.

The only dissenting voice came from Raymond Holden of the New York Times who thought the story was artificial and the characters so unrealistic that they "would not be likely to be found anywhere in flesh or fact."

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1 Chicago Sunday Tribune, September 27, 1953, p. 5.
3 Christian Science Monitor, September 17, 1953, p. 11.
SUMMARY

Elizabeth Yates McCreal, contemporary author, is a person of many and varied interests. Reflected in her books are her intense love of nature, her interest in people and their problems and her deep spiritual feeling. In her everyday life, she is an excellent cook and housekeeper, an expert in needlework, and a sportswoman with a special interest in horseback riding and mountain climbing.

Miss Yates is a prolific as well as versatile writer. Since 1938, thirty of her books have been published, books that cover a wide range of vocabulary and appeal from stories for the seven-year-old to novels for adults. Seventeen of these books are written for young people of ages 10-12. For the age group of 10-12 she has edited a collection of Cornish legends, *Piskey Folk*, written many years ago by Enys Tregarthen; two books of fiction concerning the same characters, *Mountain Born* and *A Place for Peter*; and two books with a religious emphasis, *Joseph, the King James Version of a Well-Loved Tale* and *Once in the Year, a Christmas Story*. Eight of Miss Yates’ books are for the age group 12-14. They include two biographies—*Amos Fortune, Free Man* and *Prudence Crandall, Woman of Courage*; four books of fiction—*High Holiday*, *Quest in the North-Land*, *Patterns on the Wall* and
Rainbow Round the World; and two books with a religious emphasis—The Christmas Story and Your Prayers and Mine. For the age group 15-18 Miss Yates has written four novels: Haven for the Brave, Nearby, Guardian Heart and Hue and Cry.

Critics have praised Elizabeth Yates for the exceptional beauty of her religious books, the excellent characterization in most of her novels and the thoughtful presentation of worthy subjects in her biographies. Some critics feel that, at times, Miss Yates becomes too sentimental and propagandistic and slows down the action of her story by philosophical conversations but others commend her for these same qualities, stating that young people of today need books of idealism and thoughtful reflection. All reviewers admire Miss Yates' style of writing which is called distinguished, even beautiful in its simplicity and all agree that she is at her best when describing the New England countryside. It is pointed out, however, that the books of Miss Yates will not appeal to all readers but will be interesting only to those young people for whom reading is a challenge.

Elizabeth Yates McGreal's life has been and continues to be a busy, full one. In addition to her writing and domestic duties she finds time to teach creative writing and speak before various groups. Her interest in animals, nature and people provide her with a wide choice of subject matter and insure her future writing against repetition and sameness.
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