

states intimated given their swerve toward secession and the formation of a confederacy.

By January 1861, governors of Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama confiscated federal forts and arsenals prior to officially seceding. Northern public sentiments regarded the actions as treasonous and thus were united by this belief to stand by and defend the flag, no matter the cost. At this point, a compromise was moot, given the seizure of federal property in the Southern states.

Chapter Six includes the experiences of four conciliationist men, Edward Everett, Amos Lawrence, John Munn, and William Kellogg. Each approached conciliation from different perspectives in their specific political milieus. They agreed that the way to save the Union was via compromise and diplomacy through established channels such as conventions, petitions, and resolutions. Thus, their attitudes and approaches represented the status quo on secessionist thought in the North.

Once Lincoln took office, his passive approach to neither sacrificing the Union nor provoking war from the South fell aside as he dealt with the problem of Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Yet his leadership as events unfolded demonstrated his strength of character, decisiveness, and inflexibility, which directly countered Buchanan's lame-duck wavering. Once the announcement of cabinet appointments was made, it was clear what the country's course would be, given its composition of "radicals."

The casual reader may feel lost in this book, whose scope is narrowed to the span of seven months' time—from the November 1860 election to May 1861—and whose players include major ones such as Lincoln and Seward, but also myriad lesser players who blend into one another. The academic reader will revel in McClintock's atten-

tion to detail and presentation of his interpretation and information in this rich narrative. His ability to immerse the reader within the politics and personalities of the nineteenth century is skillful indeed.

Lincoln and the Decision for War is recommended for history collections with a focus on the Civil War. In fact, it should be the one book that scholars and interested readers consult on the matter of Northern attitudes towards secession at the brink of the Civil War.

—Rebecca Tolley-Stokes, associate professor and faculty outreach librarian, East Tennessee State University

Sometimes Stuart seems to inhabit the animal, bringing news of its life to us.

STUART AND ELLIOTT REVIEW



Stuart, Dabney, and Susan E. Elliott (illustrator). *Open the Gates: Poems for Young Readers*. Montrose, CO: Pinyon Publishing, 2010. 83 pp. ISBN-13: 9780982156162. \$27.00 (softcover).

This award-winning Virginia poet, best known for his personal poetry and his dazzling variety of styles, has turned his hand here to verse for children, with delightful results.

Giraffes and hummingbirds, newts and water buffaloes, even the extinct and the mythical can be found here, in a paean to the varied creatures of the animal kingdom. The poet's wordplay is sure to charm young readers and listeners:

A born outsider,
the water strider's
a river rider,

he informs us. His poet's eye notices that the giraffe's skin is a "soft patchwork puzzle." In another poem, he describes the quail mother crossing the road with "her brood pearled out behind her."

Sometimes Stuart seems to inhabit the animal, bringing news of its life to us. What does the yak dream of, on top of her mountain?

Something hair-raising
you can bet, like a haircut
to take all that load off...

Young readers will be intrigued with the speculation in "Ex-Files": "When a creature becomes extinct, / what happens to it, do you think?" As he plays with the distinction between being and not-being—"What does the pterodactyl do / not even available to the zoo?"—Stuart is sure to get children thinking and dreaming.

The collection is bracketed by two poems that invoke the sun. In the first poem, the sun cries, "Open the gates! / I have been down here in the dark too long." At the end of the book, the weary sun confesses, "I'm tired / and almost gone from my giving," as it goes down through the gates until it's time to rise again. As the sun prepares to start up its arc, readers will surely be prompted to start reading again from the beginning.

Susan E. Elliott's exquisite watercolor paintings accompany each poem. Some are wispy and delicate, like the black and white swirl of shell accompanying the poem "Snail." Others are bold, like the full page-spread that accompanies "Iguana." Beady eye, horned spine, and mosaic skin are rendered in bright blues, golds, and reds. In the illustration for "Whales," Elliott uses blocky abstract shapes and a wash of steel blue to convey the "Great, gray sloping" creatures.

Children eight and up will enjoy hearing these poems read aloud or reading them independently. Stuart's collection is sure to find a place on library shelves next to

other distinguished anthologies for children such as Valerie Worth's *Animal Poems* and *The Beauty of the Beast: Poems from the Animal Kingdom* selected by Jack Prelutsky. Pinyon Publishing books are available from Amazon.com.

—Caroline Parr, Central Rappahannock Regional Library



Dunkle, Clare; Patrick Arrasmith, illustrator. *The House of Dead Maids*. New York: Henry Holt, 2010. 146 pp. ISBN-13: 9780805091168 (hardcover).

Readers will be drawn in right away by the intricate setting, quick pacing, and cast of fully developed characters in *The House of Dead Maids*. Tabby Ackroyd, one of many girls living at an orphanage, is selected to be the new nursemaid for Seldom House. On her first night at the house, a female ghost, reminiscent of a non-flesh-eating zombie, crawls into bed with Tabby. Not until later in the story does Tabby realize that the cold, wet “girl” who shared her bed is one of the many ghosts she later encounters, ghosts with blackness filling empty eye sockets.

Dunkle provides a wonderful excerpt from the book—in addition to links for various essays she wrote about *Wuthering Heights* and her blog tour—on her website, www.claredunkle.com:

The old looking glass in the beaded frame returned only a suggestion of features. I longed to see my new clothes, and as I stepped into the passage, I was just turning over in my mind where I might have seen a better mirror. When first I caught sight of the small figure in black, I thought it was my reflection.

She stood very still in the

dusky passage where the light was poorest. Like me, she wore the black dress that proclaimed her a maid of the house, but whereas mine was new, hers was spoiled by mildew and smears of clay. Thin hair, dripping with muddy water, fell to her shoulders in limp, stringy ropes. This was my companion of the night before—and she was dead.

Tabby is so frightened and lonely in the town where Seldom House is located, without churches

**... teens view the book
as a romance rather
than the desperate
tragedy it really is.**

DUNKLE AND ARRASMITH REVIEW

and with residents who point at her and whisper, that she rarely ventures out of the house where she's employed. Thus, it is, in part, a relief for her when her charge, called only “The Young Master” or “Himself,” arrives to live at the house. The child is reckless and conceited; after all, he is master of the house at an early age. He lacks manners, is unkempt, and goes without shoes most of the time.

Soon after his arrival at Seldom House, Himself does reach out to Tabby, in part because he is so desperate for a playmate and is seeing his own share of ghosts. Tabby, still practically a child herself, begins to enjoy the young master's companionship and seems to find him a source of comfort at times, despite his recklessness and ill-tempered behavior. Tabby even seems to enjoy participating in rather

bizarre and disturbing games with him, such as tying fancy knots using earthworms.

The House of Dead Maids maintains an eerie tone throughout as Himself and Tabby explore Seldom House looking for answers to the secrets that the maid and the butler are obviously hiding. The truly creepy experiences with ghosts recur throughout the story, and slowly reveal the shocking secrets lodged inside the puzzling house with no windows on the inner walls. The secret that the house and townspeople harbor is shocking, and leads to a satisfying ending that inspires the reader to find out what Emily Bronte actually wrote about in her classic novel, *Wuthering Heights*.

One of the best things about *The House of Dead Maids* is that it may encourage teens to read *Wuthering Heights* to look more deeply into Heathcliff's character. In my experience, talking to many teenage girls who “just love” *Wuthering Heights*, teens view the book as a romance rather than the desperate tragedy it really is. Somehow they ignore Heathcliff's behavior, which is at times frightening, as when he hangs a little dog. The doors Dunkle opens to a deeper exploration of his character may make a difference for girls who seem to view dominating, possessive, and violently passionate men as romantic.

Fans of ghost stories and of Dunkle's popular Hollow Kingdom series, and those aspiring to read the classics, will all find *The House of Dead Maids* an appealing read. The cover of the book, with its gilded silver hue and hollow-eyed “dead maid,” should make it jump off library shelves. It's a must-have for schools and public libraries alike.

—Laini Bostian, Culpepper County Library 