



BROWSE



 ***The Yule Tomte and the Little Rabbits by Ulf Stark (review)***

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Stark, Ulf *The Yule Tomte and the Little Rabbits*; t r. from the Swedish by Susan

This Swedish import, offering a short chapters for each night of Advent, tells the story of a gruff tomte (a gnomelike character who, in Swedish tradition, brings [End Page 230] Christmas gifts to children) and his encounter with a family of rabbits. This particular tomte, Grump, is grouchy enough to live up to his name but might be hiding a tender heart. One windy day Grump's mittens and his red pointed cap blow away, as does a sign reading "Tomte Co" (originally "Tomte Cottage," before a squirrel nibbled off a corner). Two rabbit children, Binny and Barty, find the hat, mittens, and sign; from the local owl, the bunnies and their family learn about tomtes, and they excitedly decide that the sign indicates that a tomte is coming to visit. When the tomte fails to arrive as expected, Binny and Barty go off in a blizzard in search of Grump, who grouches when they find him but takes care of the cold, tired children, and they all return to the rabbits' home to celebrate Christmas together. The narrative voice is smooth and sometimes wryly amused, and though the story meanders just a bit, it is nonetheless captivating. Soft linework, delicate texturing, and a gentle palette of pastels and russets make Eriksson's illustrations irresistibly cozy and inviting. The figures, both tomte and animals, are adorable and dynamic, and the members of the rabbit family are delightfully individual in their expressions and activities. This will have broad appeal as an enchanting secular Advent readaloud.

SIDMAN, JOYCE *Winter Bees & Other Poems of the Cold*; illus. by Rick Allen. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014 32p
ISBN 978-0-547-90650-8 \$17.99 R* Gr. 5-8

Previously partnered on the Newbery Honor title *Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night* (BCCB 9/10), Sidman and Allen return here with a new poetic treatment of natural history. Twelve poems treat subjects ranging from moose and snakes to snowflakes and skunk cabbage, each entry partnered with a prose paragraph giving more factual detail behind the subject of the verse. Sidman is a master at retaining overall momentum while giving the individual poems their own form and style; they range from the rollick of "Big Brown Moose" to the Yeatsian melody of "Dream of the Tundra Swan" ("When we woke, we were covered with snow/ We rose in a billow of white") to what may be the only poem, yet alone triolet, on the topic of skunk cabbage. Her informative paragraphs are written with a brio that lifts them above the merely explanatory, and their focus is tuned perfectly to the poems they complement. Allen's intricate and exquisite linocuts are here digitally layered, giving a crisply outlined collage feel to some compositions, enhancing the impact of the horizontal linework that constitutes many of the visual elements. The delicate detailing is at its best in more muted spreads, as in the flock of tundra swans or the snowflake-sugared pine grove, but there's plenty of drama in the russet intensity of the fox leaping after the vole or the inky in-your-face black of the ravens. This would be an obvious pairing with *Dark Emperor*, but it would also be a brilliant opportunity for some spontaneous poetic sharing as the flakes begin to fall. A glossary is included. DS

SISSON, STEPHANIE ROTH *Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos*; written and illus. by Stephanie Roth Sisson. Roaring Brook, 2014 31p
ISBN 978-1-59643-960-3 \$17.99 Ad 6-9 yrs

This picture-book biography paints the life of astronomer Carl Sagan in broad strokes, focusing on his childhood interest in outer space, in which science and science fiction played formative roles, and his adult career not only as a researcher, but also as a communicator of scientific knowledge to the general public. The child/adult coverage is unfortunately off-balance here, with so much space accorded to Sagan's budding curiosity that not enough is left for the specifics of his work that could prove fascinating to children, particularly his work on the *Voyager* missions, his *Cosmos* television series, and his investigations into the temperature of Venus and the possibility of extraterrestrial life. With its informal scratchy-lined figures, Sisson's mixed-media artwork has a cozy vibe that works well for a subject who integrated science and imagination throughout his work. End matter (in painfully small font) includes notes for each spread, source notes for all quotations, an adult-oriented bibliography, and an author's note on Sagan's influence on her own interest of science. EB

STARK, ULF *The Yule Tomte and the Little Rabbits*; tr. from the Swedish by Susan Beard; illus. by Eva Eriksson. Floris, 2014 101p
ISBN 978-1-78250-136-7 \$24.95 R 5-8 yrs

This Swedish import, offering a short chapter for each night of Advent, tells the story of a gruff tomte (a gnomelike character who, in Swedish tradition, brings



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