

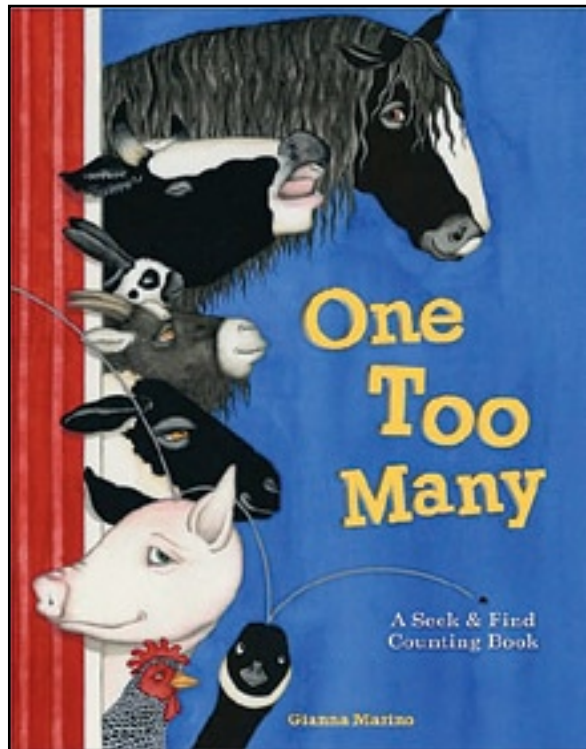
The Book REPORT California Writers Writing

By Connie Goldsmith

Hundreds of children's writers live in California. The authors of these books live in Santa Monica, Napa, Sacramento, and San Francisco. Some of today's best books are written by California writers. Take a look and see what you think.

"*A Balloon for Isabel*," by Deborah Underwood, art by Laura Rankin. (Greenwillow). The animal kindergarteners are about to graduate. Skunks, raccoons, bunnies, and baby bears get bright balloons to celebrate the big day, but not Isabel or the other little porcupines. Teacher, Mrs. Quill (herself a porcupine) says, "Balloons are not safe for porcupines. The porcupines will each get a lovely bookmark." Isabel doesn't want a bookmark. She wants a BALLOON! Isabel and Walter try to cover their quills so they can get balloons. Wearing a box doesn't work. Neither does strapping on pillows or covering themselves in bubble wrap. Finally, Isabel finds the perfect solution, sticking gumdrops over her quills. On graduation day, Isabel and the other porcupines dance into class, quills covered with colorful gumdrops. A happy celebration ensues. The animal kids are darling, with wonderfully expressive faces. This is a sweet and appealing story.

"*Finding Danny*," by Linzi Glass. (Walden Pond Press). I dare anyone who loves dogs to read this charming book without a few tears! Bree's journalist parents have killer schedules and never enough time for her. Border collie Danny is Bree's constant companion. Newsmom leaves the gate open one day and Danny disappears. So begins Bree's search for him and her foray into the world of lost and abandoned shelter dogs. Quirky dog rescuer Rayleen inspires Bree to set up an adoption day for red-listed dogs (those due to be put down). It's a huge success and all the dogs find new homes. The story ends happily when Danny and Bree reunite. Penned by real-life dog rescuer Linzi Glass, this story may tempt you to look in your local shelter for



the perfect dog who is waiting for you! Check out Linzi's organization at: www.theforgottendog.org.

"*One Too Many: a Seek & Find Counting Book*," by Gianna Marino. (Chronicle Books). What a busy barnyard! One flea jumps at sunset to a watering trough. Two cows, three horses, four goats, five sheep – you get the picture – soon follow. Watch the flea as it jumps from page to page amongst the ever-increasing array of animals around the trough. Finally, "one too many" arrives. It won't shock you to learn which animal empties out the place in a big hurry. The artist/author keeps the fun going with extra seek and find challenges at the end. Count the total number of animals. Find the rabbit that climbs on other animals, or the pig whose ear the other animals like to nibble. Parents and children can find hours of fun in this beautifully designed book with a surprise, "Uh-Oh" ending!

"*Come See the Earth Turn*," by Lori Mortensen, art by Raul Allen. (Tricycle Press). For two centuries scientists tried but failed to prove the Earth turned on its axis. In 1851, Léon Foucault, a seemingly minor scientist, built the first pendulum, a weight that swings back and forth while suspended from a fixed point. He invited the scientists of Paris to watch his amazingly simple experiment. Foucault releases his pendulum, which at first, swings back and forth along a line on the floor. As the minutes tick by, the pendulum starts to swing away from the line. Everyone knew what that meant – the pendulum wasn't swinging in a different

direction – the Earth was rotating beneath it. The author conveys a complex scientific concept in a way that readers will readily grasp. Science teachers and librarians will enjoy showing this book to their students.

"*Babies Don't Eat Pizza, a Big Kids' Book About Baby Brothers and Baby Sisters*," by Dianne Danzig, art by Debbie Tilley. (Dutton). This book stands head and shoulders above others of its genre – prepping older sibs for a new baby. Maybe it's how the author gives the sib a stake in the new baby, saying, "your baby," over and over. Maybe it's giving the sib credit for being older and wiser, inviting him to help mom with the new baby. Maybe it's the scene showing prenatal somersaults. Or just maybe it's because the author is a real-life R.N. and an experienced teacher of sibling preparation classes. Giggle at the humorous advice sections covering what babies like (sticky, gooey messes) and what they eat (hint: NOT pizza!). The ink and watercolor cartoon drawings filled with visual jokes add another dimension to this fun book. The final page gives tips on how to manage the current child and the newcomer.

Connie Goldsmith lives in Carmichael where she writes for adults and children. Her latest nonfiction juvenile books, "*Battling Malaria: on the front lines against a global killer*," and "*Skin Cancer*," one of the new USA Today Health Reports series, came out in August. Her books can be found in school and public libraries, and at online booksellers.