

book reviews

The Natural Cat: Understanding Your Cat's Needs and Instincts

By Helga Hofmann, PH.D.
(Voyageur Press)

The Natural Cat is the ultimate book for cat-lovers. Informative and wonderfully written this book tells you everything you've ever wanted to know about your beloved feline. From the origin of the domestic cat to an examination of its behaviour, this book examines every facet of feline life.

Another great thing in *The Natural Cat* are the many beautiful photographs. There are lots and lots of gorgeous cat pictures taken by Monika Wegler that emphasize the points made in the text. Any feline enthusiast will enjoy the pictures as much as the text in this book.

The Natural Cat is a wonderful book for those interested in cats. More than just educational, it is also plenty of fun.

-- C.A. Schneider

In the Kingdom of Air

By Tim Binding

This book is the story of a middle-aged man named Giles. Using the confusing technique of flashback-recall, we learn that Giles lost his true love, Stella, to a murder at the tender age of 13. When he goes back to his hometown, his sister discovers that Stella is indeed alive. The problem is that no one can find her and Giles' sister, the only person who knows of Stella's whereabouts, is attacked and lapses into a coma.

When I read the beginning of the book, Giles has affairs with three women which are described in detail. It is my opinion that too many books about sex are ruining the world of literature. Once the reader gets through the first few chapters, the rest of the plot is understandable.

-- Kathryn Nass

Dream Catcher: A Nighttime Journal (Chronicle Books)

Dream Catcher is a lovely little journal style note book. Hard covered and ring-bound, this journal is as practical as it is beautiful. Each page has a date and time slot for you to fill in when you had the dream and plenty of space to detail each dream completely. Every fifth page has an inspirational dream quote in the margin, people like Emily Bronte and Chuang-Tzu are quoted. These quotes add to the almost meditative quality of this dream journal. This beautiful little book would make a wonderful gift for that special dreamer in your life.

-- C.A. Schneider

Saints

By Tom Morgan
(Chronicle Books)

Good Catholic lad that I am, I snapped up this book as soon as I saw it-- after all, a handy guide to our heavenly helpers can't hurt (there are approximately ten thousand of them floating around in the hereafter). Regardless, this is not a book for Bible-thumpers, nor is it a strictly academic volume. The author simply selected and biographically profiled 120 saints whose lives he found to be especially interesting or inspiring. Morgan also compiled this assemblage of saints' lives with artistic reference in mind, including a wide variety of illustrations both famous and obscure in a variety of media. Familiarity with the saints (much like a knowledge of key Greco-Roman mythological figures) is often a key to the interpretation and appreciation of artwork, since much of history's finest art is religious. So, it's an art appreciation book as well as a religious/historical biographical reference. Plus, the saints are arranged according to their feast days, with indexes of patron saints for everything from television to paratroopers. This makes it easy for folks to find whatever saint may be particular to themselves, their occupations and their preoccupations. A glossary of saintly terminology rounds out the volume in useful fashion, and as the dust jacket points out, this book's even a convenient naming guide for prospective parents of a religious bent. *Saints* is a very attractive and intelligent but unpretentiously accessible book.

-- Sean McQuaid

The Child Within has been Awakened but the Old Lady on the Outside Just Collapsed: A Cathy Collection

By Cathy Guisewite
(Andrews and McMeel)

This collection of Cathy comics is more than just funny, it is life. Cathy is a woman all of us can identify with in one form or another. She is our mothers and ourselves all rolled into one particularly entertaining entity.

Cathy's problems are those all of us have faced. She deals with stress at work, a newlywed best-friend, a friend with kids and a completely confusing significant other. She also has her overly protective parents to make life interesting.

Amongst all the people problems Cathy deals with, she also fights with an increasingly body-conscious society. Cathy deals with issues of importance to women of today, the horror of bathing suit shopping being one of the funnier ones. She helps us see the humour in our consumer-based society and the unfairness of such a society.

Guisewite has created a character and a life which is easily recognizable. She has also commented on the issues that are important to people in today's society. This collection is funny, and will keep you giggling for hours.

-- C.A. Schneider

The Curse of Madame "C"

By Gary Larson
(Andrews & McMeel)

He may be showing signs of age (not to mention his novelty having long since worn off), but Larson is still the reigning mad genius of newspaper comics. For every dud, there's a gem-- and some of the panels are priceless, like Scotty in Hell ("Satan! Satan! It's the main megafurnace! She's losin' power and the temperature is dropping fast!.... I'm not sure I can hold her!"), packrats in jail ("I would have gotten away scot-free if I had just gotten rid of the evidence"), and The Little Engine That Couldn't. Sweetening the deal is a brand-new, full-colour, pseudo-autobiographical introductory story by Larson in which he tells of his European encounter with the paranormal bovine seductress Madame "C" and how it changed his life. It's fun stuff, taking a poke at Larson's cow fetish from a self-referential, meta-cartooning perspective. Even without the wacky intro, *The Curse of Madame "C"* is another enjoyable Larson volume.

-- Sean McQuaid