

Multimedia Review

DVDS & AUDIO



K2: Siren of the Himalayas

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DVD

PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 4

Brother Hugo and the Bear. 14 min. Dist. by Dreamscape Media. 2015. \$38.99. ISBN 9781681416205.

K-Gr 3—Based on historical legend, this adaptation of Katy Beebe's picture book (Erdmans, 2014) honors the medieval practice of painstakingly copying books by hand and decorating the text with painted illustrations and gold illumination. In the story, Brother Hugo travels from one monastery to another to borrow a book to copy as a replacement for one consumed by a bear. Viewers will be enlightened about the enormity of Hugo's task when his fellow monks step up to help him: stretching sheepskin for parchment, making ink, plucking a goose feather for a pen, and binding and covering the tome in leather. Brother Hugo toils through winter while the book-devouring bear sleeps, but when the young man journeys to return the book in the spring, the bear is in pursuit. Those impressed with the extent of work involved in creating the manuscript may not appreciate the humor of the bear snatching the book from Hugo at the monastery's gate. Viewers may be distracted by the animator's means of moving the still illustrations of Hugo through the landscape; as he travels, it appears that he is flying. Subtle chanting and a full orchestral introduction and finale contribute to the at-

mosphere, as does the British-accented narration by Gildart Jackson and vocabulary such as *befell*, *verily*, and *smote*. **VERDICT** Historically interesting and gorgeously illustrated, this excellent video offers a glimpse of a medieval practice that is likely to have limited general appeal or application in the classroom, but for the right student, it's a gem.—*Constance Dickerson, Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library, OH*

I'm a Big Girl: A Story for Dads and Daughters. 12 min. Dist. by Dreamscape. 2015. \$38.99. ISBN 9781681416175.

PreS-K—This DVD presents a father's wistful expression of how quickly time passes. When his little girl announces that she's a big girl now and can go up the stairs to bed by herself, he imagines four ages of her life: as she is now, as an older child, a teen with a backpack, and at the top of the stairs in a wedding dress. He becomes relieved when she reaches the top of the stairs and calls him to tuck her into bed. Author Greg Pope narrates his text (Flowerpot, 2014) to the accompaniment of a gentle solo piano, but the rhymes are sometimes awkward. The illustrations by Lea Wells are sweet, if rudimentary. In one, the daughter's hand reaches up to hold her father's, whose arm looks like it's disembodied, and the proportions of the girl to her father and to her cat are incon-

sistent. The two supplemental lullabies on the DVD shine, though. Here Pope's voice is rich and folksy, and in his original song, "Write You a Lullaby," he demonstrates that he can turn a phrase and compose a satisfying refrain. His version of the standard "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" has interesting phrasing and a lovely female voice singing harmony. **VERDICT** Fathers may enjoy sharing this DVD with their daughters, and they may relate to the parental reflection on how quickly children grow up.—*Constance Dickerson, Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library, OH*

The Little Zoo that Could. 10:41 hrs. Dist. by Ivan's Ark Productions. Littlezoothatcould.com. 2015. \$399.95. ISBN unavail.

Gr 4 Up—Previously seen as a 14-episode documentary series on Animal Planet, this four-disc set offers viewers an opportunity to absorb all of the hardships, struggles, and small victories endured by the small staff of a nonprofit community zoo. Nestled on 17 acres near the beach front coastline of Alabama is the unique and charming Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo, with 270 exotic animals and a devoted staff of 28. The first episode begins with the announcement of a Category-4 hurricane—2004's Hurricane Ivan—headed straight for the Alabama coastline and the zoo's decision to evacuate all of the animals, a dangerous undertaking for all. Viewers observe how this massive operation was carried out and the sacrifices that were made to save the animals. Ten months after Hurricane Ivan, Hurricane Dennis hit the region and not far behind was Hurricane Katrina. The series does an excellent job of detailing the ways that the staff prepared for another exodus. The program also captures the massive rebuilding efforts after Katrina. However, there are moments, episode to episode, of unnecessary repetition. This series probably would work better for a public library, but for a course on animal care or on the impact of extreme weather, the episodes on the first disc may be useful for class study. **VERDICT** This is a heartwarming, educational, and close-up view of a community's heroic efforts.—*Sheila Acosta, San Antonio Public Library, TX*

Paper Planes. 96 min. Dist. by Entertainment One. 2015. Streaming \$16.98. ISBN unavail.

Gr 3-8—In this film set in modern-day Australia, 12-year-old Dylan (played with a beguil-

KEY: ★ Excellent in relation to other titles on the same subject or in the same genre