

taining program uses reenactments and dramatic voice-over narration to profile some big names in pirate history. Many, such as Blackbeard, who mixed gunpowder in his rum and besieged the port of Charleston, were as evil as their reputations, while others, including Sir Francis Drake, carried out missions for their government as they attacked enemy ships. Female pirates Mary Reed and Anne Bonny hid their gender beneath men's clothing and the pirate's swaggering persona until they earned the respect of fellow sailors. Some pirates were executed like outlaws, and others escaped, but all followed their own code of honor and lived for the adventure. Fans of Johnny Depp and the blockbuster *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies will enjoy this fact-based program. DVD extras include more pirate profiles and swashbuckling pirate movie trailers. —*Candace Smith*

YA: Teens will enjoy this entertaining slice of history. *CS.*

Washington the Warrior. 2006. 92min. A&E, DVD, \$24.95.

Beginning with highlights of George Washington's first command as an officer in the Virginia Militia in 1753, this in-depth program follows the young soldier throughout his military career, including his role as head of the Continental army. At more than six feet tall, the accomplished horseman struck an imposing figure, yet despite his

he was not initially a successful military commander, in part because of his impetuosity and poor judgment. Washington learned from his disasters, soon earning respect and allegiance from his soldiers. Commentary from scholars, reenactment footage, and journal excerpts add depth and variety to this portrait of Washington. War and history buffs should also check out *Lincoln* [BKL Je 1 & 15 06]. —*Candace Smith*

YA/C: Good supplemental material for high-school history students. *CS.*

Youth

The Busy Little Engine (and His Friend, Pig). 2005. 34min. Squirrel Tracks, DVD, \$15.95. PreS-K.

Biz, a hardworking, animated toy freight train, chugs alongside real trains through towns and the countryside, while an on-screen hand puppet named Pig asks questions (both silly and serious) about what different train cars carry and how the train works. An offscreen narrator's practical responses accompany helpful visual stills, such as a tank car portrayed as a bottle on wheels. Biz travels to farms to collect ingredients (butter, sugar, flours) for cookies. Viewers then see how each is processed from raw materials. Biz brings the ingredients to a factory, where they are made into cookies, which are then packaged and shipped by rail to stores. Three original songs stress learning through imagination and curiosity in this fun DVD. Bonus features include a neat "making of" short. —*Abby Alpert*

Exploring Our Past: Native Peoples of North America. 2006. 100min. Mazzarella, 5 VHS or DVDs, \$189.95. Gr. 3-5.

This five-part program "introduces the Native American tribes that have lived in diverse regions of the country." The program begins by explaining how many arrived in North America via a land route from Asia. Maps and animations illustrate the concept and help viewers understand the migration. The programs emphasize the diversity of Native Americans, stressing how different environments influenced their choice of dwellings and clothing. Live-action footage from several living-history museums demonstrate various aspects of traditional life, including cooking, housing, and clothing. Photographs help provide context. Singer-songwriter Joanne Carter's narration aids the coverage, but at times it seems as if the audio does not correlate with the visuals. As a history resource, this makes no mention of contemporary Native Americans. A good classroom supplement. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

The Firekeeper's Son. 2006. 11min. Nutmeg, VHS, \$49.95 (0-9747118-7-X); DVD, \$49.95 (0-9771510-5-0). 877-262-3690. K-Gr. 3.

Early-nineteenth-century Korea is the set-

ting for Linda Sue Park's evocative picture book (2004) about a young boy's struggle to choose responsibility over his desire for excitement. Sang-hee's father is the village firekeeper, and every night he lights a fire to signal the king that all is well. After his father is injured, Sang-hee is asked to light the nightly fire and keep it burning. Although tempted by the idea of witnessing real soldiers if the fire were to go out, Sang-hee knows he must continue the family duty. Park narrates in a contemplative, effective manner, while pans of Julie Downing's watercolor-and-pastel illustrations help convey the youngster's conflicting emotions. Occasionally, superimposed illustrations fade in and out, giving a sense of movement. Varying visual perspectives add to the drama as Sang-hee makes critical decisions. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

Let George Do It! 2006. 6min. Nutmeg, VHS, \$49.95 (0-9776262-9-6); DVD, \$49.95 (1-933938-19-6). PreS-Gr. 2.

In this humorous story, all five sons (and Dad) are named George, which can get confusing. Today is Big George's birthday and all the Georges pull together to get ready for the big party. But which George is doing what? Children will laugh out loud as they watch this zany adaptation of former heavyweight boxing champion George Foreman's comedic story in which five brothers with the same name know they can always count on a George to help out. Simple in its overall production, the program features iconographic images and a pleasing piano soundtrack. The real treat is George Foreman's narration; he adds just the right punch to the story. The watercolor cartoon illustrations are as fun as the text and include portraits of other famous Georges, including Washington, Orwell, and Carver. Undeniably entertaining. —*Joan Kindig*

Tot-a-Doodle-Do! 2006. 30min. Children's Creative Programming, DVD, \$19.95. PreS-K.

In short segments that revolve around a specific theme (including crafts, snacks, and manners), kids learn how to make sculpting dough; open an imaginary box, from which they pull out school supplies; meet a kindergarten teacher; assemble a healthy snack (pinwheel sandwiches); learn good manners; and hop and bop to lively music. The hosts, including both adults and a puppet, are friendly, patient, and respectful to the kid actors. Lively music supports each segment and helps smooth the transitions, while captions help summarize keywords and other information. The young participants are encouraged to interrupt and ask questions, and their efforts are always praised. Other titles in this ongoing series deal with transportation and animals. The short segments, pleasing sets, and lively pacing make this particularly appealing for young viewers. —*Edie Ching*

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