

hood and education. The appropriateness of toys, far from being a technical feature, emerges as profoundly political, something fundamentally socially constructed.

The Handbook of Developmentally Appropriate Toys, then, should not be read by educators as a recipe book, with simple instructions for one-size-fits-all educational solutions. We should read it, instead, as an atlas, which offers us detailed maps and relevant data of the vast territory that is the world of toys. It is a tool that contains suggestions, recommendations, and examples. But, ultimately, it delegates to our own contextual judgment and expertise the difficult task of deciding what criteria define appropriateness and what approaches are able to encourage forms of developmentally appropriate play.

—Mattia Thibault, *Tampere University, Tampere, Finland*

Two Wheels Good: The History and Mystery of the Bicycle

Jody Rosen

New York: Crown, 2022. Prologue, introduction, acknowledgments, notes, photo credits, and index. 338 pp. \$28.99, hardcover. ISBN: 9780804141499

As much as we include the bicycle in our nostalgic recollections of fun and youth, for the past two centuries this contraption has played—and still plays—a major role in the practical activities of people of all ages and all places. As Jody Rosen, a pop culture and music critic whose works have appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, *New Yorker*, *Slate*, and other

publications, informs us in this idiosyncratic but charming book, there may be a billion automobiles worldwide, but there are two billion bikes, and they have mostly serious functions. Though car culture dominates most nations, Rosen reminds us that, “Around the world, more people travel by bicycle than by any other form of transportation” (p. 5).

Two Wheels Good consists of a useful history of the bicycle from its invention in Germany in 1817 to the present, plus an unconnected series of chapters and essays that focus on uses of the bike in various international contexts to highlight what Rosen says are “some different stories” (p. 14). Though he does not overlook ways bikes have evoked controversy and unfriendly reactions, especially from automobile drivers, Rosen is a true enthusiast able to wax poetic at the mention of a two-wheeled, human-powered vehicle. To him, a “bike ride is better than yoga, or wine, or weed” (p. 17). Beyond this euphoria, Rosen identifies uses of the bicycle that are rarely considered. For example, in one chapter he relates that prospectors during the Klondike gold rush of the 1890s freed themselves from depending on costly draft animals by riding bikes in their search for a strike. In another chapter, he notes that in Bhutan, one of the world’s more mountainous countries and one where paved roads are scarce, there nevertheless has been an official effort to make the country a “bicycling culture.” Rosen also introduces readers to the joys and challenges of bike races and expeditions, such as the Bikecentennial, in which more than four thousand riders pedaled from Astoria, Oregon, to Yorktown, Virginia, in 1976 to celebrate the two hundredth anni-

versary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. And, he also expands his coverage to three-wheeled vehicles by recounting his experiences riding in a rikshaw in oppressively crowded Dhaka, Bangladesh, dubbed the “rikshaw capital of the world” (p. 221).

A few years ago, I was cruising on the Seine in France when I witnessed a young man on the shore heave his bike into the river, a scene that illustrated firsthand Rosen’s point that today waterways in France, England, and The Netherlands have become common depositories for unwanted or stolen bicycles. (I think the fellow I observed had fallen off his bike and gave it a watery burial in a fit of anger.) So Rosen is cognizant of both the abuses as well as the uses of this universal vehicle. Rosen’s book is replete with information like this, as well as his own experiences, that make it an engaging read.

A disappointment for me is that Rosen barely mentions the importance of bicycles to childhood and play. Not until page 252 does he make the point that “a child’s first bike ride . . . enacts the flight from the clutches of adult caretakers.” As anyone who grew up riding a bike can attest, this simple invention has been central to a youngster’s quest for freedom. True, a kid might have used it to run errands for the family, but mostly their ride was one of escape to join peers in acts of independent play and joy. Rosen’s use of recollections of such acts of release from interviews and autobiographies or, better yet, from young people’s own voices would have enriched the book.

—Howard P. Chudacoff, *Brown University, Providence, RI*

Cosplay: A History

Andrew Liptak

New York: Saga Press, 2022. Foreword, introduction, acknowledgments. 368 pp. \$24.99, paper. ISBN: 9781534455825

Andrew Liptak’s *Cosplay: A History* discusses the development, creativity, and playfulness of fan costumes. In recent years, cosplay (the dress-up and reenactment of fictional characters) has become more popular at conventions and social media. By now, it is a well-known practice within fan cultures and also known by outsiders. Liptak’s book explores the history of these cultures in detail. Through its many examples and cases, it paints a lively picture of these cultures, as well as their participants and their passion for costuming. The book provides insider views as well, drawing from Andrew Liptak’s experience as a journalist, historian, and member of the costuming organization of *Star Wars’* The 501st Legion.

Cosplay: A History discusses the long history of cosplay and cosplaying, including such traditions as Halloween. Cosplay’s development happened alongside the growing popularity of fan conventions. Different competitions, groups, and scenes emerged and gradually became more international, as Liptak explains. Recent trends in cosplay are discussed as well. Cosplay, for instance, is increasingly mediated by internet platforms. Liptak discusses the different technologies that drive cosplay and are used to create communities, share tutorials, photoshoots, and new types of content. How have online forums, social media, and gaming contributed to the success of cosplay? Liptak traces the development of these different