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APPLE Written and illustrated by Nikki McClure. 40 pp. Abrams Appleseed. \$12.95. (Picture book; ages 3 to 6)

McClure's homage to the old-fashioned apple lands like a spirited rebuke to packaged baggies of presileed fruit and G.M. apples that never rot. Her trademark block cutouts, pared down here to black, white and red delicious, travel backward from ripe fruit to planted seed, well timed for an autumn tale about seasons and renewal. The art is gorgeous, the text is one-word-perpage minimal and the "story" is sprinkled with welcome surprises. An apple swings from its tree; a girl hides an apple in her backpack on her way to school and forgets it on the ground at recess. Think a new tree will grow there?

LITTLE SWEET POTATO

By Amy Beth Bloom. Illustrated by Noah Z. Jones. 32 pp. Katherine Tegen Books. \$16.99. (Picture book; ages 4 to 7)

Poor sweet potato — all that vitamin C, and still lumped together with the stuff of French fries. Bloom, a National Book Award finalist for grown-ups, turns her pen to picture books and sweet potatoes in this heartfelt and heartwarming debut about a tuber who doesn't fit in. The carrots are disdainful. The eggplants, full of themselves. "You're a lumpy, bumpy, dumpy vegetable, and we're beautful," the flowers sneer. Luckly, in this mean-kids parable, Little Sweet Potato finds a more accepting patch of flora to plant himself in. Probably organic, too.



SEED BY SEED
The Legend and Legacy
of John "Appleseed" Chapman.
By Esmé Raji Codell.
Illustrated by Lynne Rae Perkins.
32 pp. Greenuillow Books/
HarperCollins Publishers. \$16.99.
(Picture book ages 4 to 8) (Picture book; ages 4 to 8)

Codell asks readers to seat themselves at a window, looking out over a highway Codeli asks readers to seat themselves at a window, looking out over a nighway-covered landscape and imagine a "quiet, tree-bough-tangled world, the world before the cement was poured and the lights turned on." Codell's lifting text and Perkins's sumptious landscapes will have urban parents ready to up-and-to-the-country. But stick around for the man's frontier life story, told here inspira-tion style. This is Johnny Appleseed — pioneer, reader, vegetarian, spiritual-ist, businessman, friend of American Indians and tamer of wolves. He planted

CREEPY CARROTS
By Aaron Reynolds. Illustrated by Peter Brown.
40 pp. Simon & Schuster. \$16.99. (Picture book; ages 4 to 8)

Zombies, bullies, root vegetables — they're all pretty scary to children. Especially when combined in an oversize carrot. Playing off a child's worst nightmare, Reynolds shows how carrots suddenly seem to lurk in every corner, tormenting a poor bunny. The stark and atmospheric illustrations by Brown ("Children Make Terrible Pets"), working exclusively in shades of gray save the garish orange of the vegetables in question, are simply splendid. But be warned: for the 5-year-old faint of heart, the story may sting too sharply.



READY FOR PUMPKINS

Written and illustrated by Kate Duke. 40 pp. Alfred A. Knopf. \$16.99. (Picture book; ages 5 to 8)

Duke ("Our Guinea Pig Is Not Enough") introduces Hercules, first-grade rodent, in a multilayered tale about time, the seasons and the long, impatient wait for a full-grown pumpkin to pick. Abandoning the formula for class-pet tales, Duke shows Hercules to have a life outside the classroom. When the teacher takes Herky to her country home for the summer, he discovers his horticultural side. Especially marvelous is what Herky's accomplishment shows children: animals and plants have lives and life cycles of their own.

PAMELA PAUL

ONLINE A slide show of this week's illustrated books at nytimes.com/books.