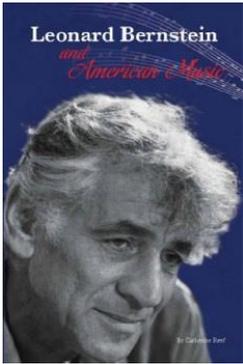


# Modern Music Masters



## Midwest Book Review

### Leonard Bernstein and American Music

Catherine Reef, author

Morgan Reynolds Publishing

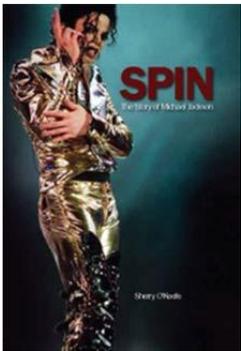
620 South Elm Street, Suite 387

Greensboro, North Carolina 27406

9781599351254, \$28.95, [www.morganreynolds.com](http://www.morganreynolds.com)

"Leonard Bernstein and American Music" is an excellent music biography of a famous American conductor and composer written to appeal to a student audience age 11 and up. Part of the Modern Music Masters series featuring 20th century and more recent composers and performers, "Leonard Bernstein and American Music" highlights the many varied achievements of the great American conductor/composer over a career spanning over 50 years, from 1937 to 1990. Leonard Bernstein was a passionate musician, composer, and conductor who was determined to allow the message of great music be accessed by a wide, freely flowing audience. He was an Everyman figure of enormous importance in American serious music. This biography features many black and white and color photos of the conductor and many associates and friends throughout his spectacular career, teamed with a fast moving, exciting narrative of the amazing life achievements, travels and performances of the renegade impresario. From "West Side Story" to "Candide," from "Trouble in Tahiti" to the "Chichester Psalms," from Tanglewood to the Pacific Music Festival in Japan, Bernstein's amazing musical career in composition and conducting is unequalled in breadth, scope, and variety. Always vital, part of a cutting edge of musical awareness, Bernstein's legacy will be enjoyed, performed, and analyzed for ages to come. Presenting Bernstein's life and achievements condensed into 107 pages, "Leonard Bernstein and American Music" does a spectacular job of covering the dazzling details and highlights of an amazing career. The biography ends with a timeline from 1918 to 1990, a list of sources by chapter, a bibliography, web sites, and list of major works (Bernstein wrote 18 concert works from 1943 to 1989, two operas, music for three ballets, music for six musicals, and five books about music). This excellent juvenile series is given highest recommendations for music education sources.

## Kidsbiographer.com



### Spin: The Story of Michael Jackson

By Sherry O'Keefe

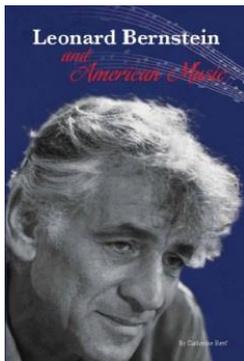
(Morgan Reynolds Publishing, Greensboro, North Carolina, 2011, \$28.95)

Worshipped, reviled, ridiculed, Michael Jackson inspired strong emotions. During his last two decades, his controversial personal life attracted more attention than his music. Was Jacko a pedophile or just a naïve eccentric? In *Spin: The Story of Michael Jackson*, Sherry O'Keefe presents the entertainer as a childlike man who both craved and hated fame, manipulated the media and felt threatened by its depiction of him.

O'Keefe is strongest when she discusses Jackson's painful beginnings and its consequences for his later life. His father Joseph Jackson saw a goldmine in his talented children. As the Jackson 5, Michael and four of his older brothers quickly won acclaim. However, life on the road meant the end of Michael's childhood. Compelled to perform at bars and strip clubs, Jackson also saw his father cheat on his mother – and Joseph beat his sons when they didn't meet his high expectations. When Michael Jackson achieved success as a solo act, he set about reclaiming the childhood he never had, complete with exotic pets, a personal amusement park, and play dates. His best friends were children and fellow child stars, including Jane Fonda and Elizabeth Taylor. Although he demanded the title "King of Pop" and fed the press stories about his eccentric behavior, he was terrified of fans and rarely gave interviews.

To some extent, O'Keefe also explores Jackson's less savory side. She reveals how he purchased the rights to other artists' music, which nearly ended his friendship with Paul McCartney. When his sister Janet attained stardom in the mid-eighties, he was so threatened by her success that he refused to dance in front of her. He was terrified she would copy his dance moves. And although O'Keefe believes in Jackson's natural talent, she admits his limitations. "For Michael, music was more about commercial success than about artistic expression," she writes. "He measured his success by the number of albums sold, the number of sold-out concerts on tour, and by the number of hit singles." However, although O'Keefe touches on Jackson's oddness, she doesn't contextualize his most bizarre behavior. Anxious to have his children all to himself, he asked second wife Debbie Rowe to sign away her custody rights to their two children. All three of his children bear his name (Prince Michael, Paris Katherine Michael, and Prince Michael II), and he compelled all three to wear masks in public. O'Keefe tries to be matter-of-fact, even understanding, about Jackson's parenting decisions, but even sympathetic readers may be disgusted by the star's tendency to see his children as extensions of himself.

Magazines, newspapers, tabloids, and the web are filled with information and speculation about the late Michael Jackson. In *Spin*, Sherry O'Keefe shows how a scared little boy became a frightened man. - *Dorothy A. Dahm*, kidsbiographer.com



**Kidsbiographer.com**

**Leonard Bernstein and American Music**

By Catherine Reef

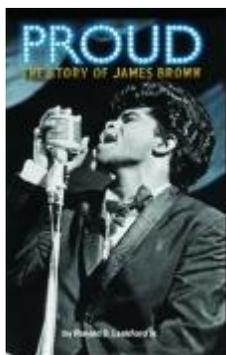
(Morgan Reynolds, 2013, Greensboro, NC, \$28.95)

Most artists are content to excel in one genre. Leonard Bernstein won fame as a conductor, pianist, and composer of operas, symphonies, and Broadway musicals. The first major American-born conductor, Bernstein led a peripatetic life, traveling the world to teach, conduct, and use music to bring people together. He also gave television broadcasts, educating the public about music and bringing classical music to a wider audience.

In *Leonard Bernstein and American Music*, Catherine Reef introduces young adults to Bernstein's work and the exuberant, generous man himself. She puts his oeuvre in its historical context, relating his compositions to both other music of the era and to the political and social movements

that inspired Bernstein. Readers need not have a tremendous musical background to understand these discussions; Reef's biography is, in many ways, a music appreciation course, one that the composer-conductor himself would have approved. *Leonard Bernstein and American Music* is also an intensely personal biography. Reef writes movingly of his profound dedication to Israel, civil rights, and peace. Throughout his career, Bernstein brought together former enemies to make music; he believed the emotions expressed in music could heal wounds and remind people of all they had in common. About Bernstein's marriage and bisexuality Reef is refreshingly frank: she neither glosses over nor sensationalizes his marital problems and affairs. Instead, she presents the facts to create a nuanced portrait of Bernstein.

Even at the end of his life, as he battled emphysema, Bernstein was full of plans to write music and educate young musicians. His energy and enthusiasm were contagious, and *Leonard Bernstein and American Music* should motivate readers to explore his music and make the most of their own opportunities to create and contribute. -Dorothy A. Dahm, kidsbiographer.com



**Kidsbiographer.com**

**Proud: The Story of James Brown**

By Ronald J. Lankford, Jr.

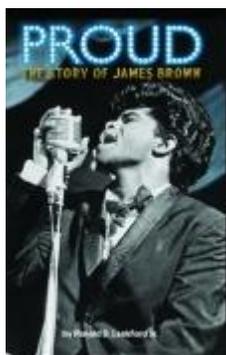
(Morgan Reynolds, 2014, Greensboro, N.C., \$28.95)

Renowned for perfectionism, politics, and theatrical performances, James Brown helped shape American music in the latter half of the twentieth century. The man who served as midwife to soul and funk grew up in the blues: born into poverty, abandoned by his mother at four, Brown was raised by various relatives in segregated Georgia and South Carolina. At sixteen, he went to prison for breaking and entering. How he soared from prison to the pop charts seems nothing less than an American fairy tale.

In *Proud*, music scholar Ronald D. Lankford explores Brown's remarkable ascent to stardom. He skillfully intertwines musical and American history with Brown's story to educate young adults about

the entertainer's contributions to pop music and the Civil Rights movement. Lankford does not neglect the uglier side of the sixties; he describes the unfair treatment black soldiers encountered while serving in Vietnam. He also articulates Brown's complex political position: a strong belief in equal rights coupled with an unwavering faith in America as a land of opportunity. Finally, quotes, often poignant, from Brown and those who knew him, complete Lankford's portrait of the volatile, ambitious, and larger-than-life musician.

*Proud* is a nuanced young adult biography of a complicated and important artist. Today, over one thousand hip-hop tracks contain samples from Brown's oeuvre; these songs, along with *Proud*, should introduce Brown to a new generation of fans. -Dorothy A. Dahm, kidsbiographer.com



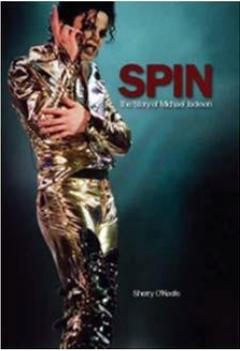
**School Library Journal**

June 2013

LANKFORD, Ronald D., Jr. **Proud: The Story of James Brown.** 128p. (Modern Music Masters Series). bibliog. chron. discography. further reading. glossary. index. notes. photos. websites. Morgan Reynolds. 2013. PLB \$28.95. ISBN 978-1-59935-374-6. LC 2012035353.

Gr 6-9-Lankford presents Brown's life from his 1933 birth in a South Carolina shack, through a tumultuous career, to his death in 2006. He examines his subject's influence on the evolution of popular music, from gospel to R & B, rock to soul and funk. Still relevant today, The Hardest Working Man in Show Business's 78 albums form "the bedrock of hip-hop" and are sampled extensively by rappers. Mostly black-and-white photos capture Brown's larger-than-life personality at various stages of his career. The writing is clear with good background and detailed descriptions of the cultural context in which Brown performed. But it's hard to appreciate a sentence like "Disco stayed on the surface of the groove, while funk dug into the groove" without listening to a recording.

The bibliography includes websites for articles, album reviews, and a discography, but no videos, though readers will easily find archived performances on YouTube with a simple search. Music lovers will see beyond James Brown, flashy performer, to the innovator and musical trailblazer who continues to inspire popular entertainers today. -Toby Rajput, National Louis University, Skokie, IL



### Booklist

Issue: November 1, 2010

*Spin: The Story of Michael Jackson.* O'Keefe, Sherry (Author)

Sep 2010. 144 p. Morgan Reynolds, library edition, \$28.95. (9781599351346). 782.42166092.

This biography of the King of Pop is highly readable and very complete. It follows Jackson from his earliest days in Gary, Indiana, and makes all the professional and emotional stops along the way. Throughout, readers can see where his music was informed by other influences and enhanced by his associations with people such as Quincy Jones; his own natural genius and the rewards of being a perfectionist are also discussed. But there is also much about his personal struggles with his family, particularly his father, his looks, and his isolation. Jackson's peculiar relationship with children is covered, including his trial on charges of child molestation, but the author seems to come down on the side of his not being a pedophile. Unlike many biographies, equal weight is given to Jackson's music and personal life, and his marriage to Lisa Marie Presley is particularly well covered. Many black-and-white and color photographs add depth, and sources notes, a time line and an extensive bibliography are appended. If you need just one biography of Jackson, this is a good choice.— *Ilene Cooper*



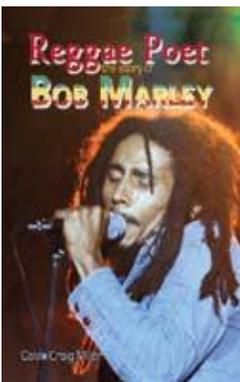
### School Library Journal

November, 2010

O'KEEFE, Sherry. *Spin: The Story of Michael Jackson.* 144p. (Modern Music Masters Series).

photos. bibliog. chron. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2010. PLB \$28.95. ISBN 978-1-59935-134-6. LC 2009054191.

Gr 6-9—The King of Pop's roller-coaster-ride life is recounted in this detailed biography. From humble beginnings in Gary, IN, to a sheltered life on the road as a child and young man, Jackson never knew a normal childhood. His talents surpassed those of his brothers, and family conflict drove him to separate himself professionally. O'Keefe does not shy away from the star's deep insecurity and bizarre behavior, including the molestation charges and multiple plastic surgeries. Finally, the text mentions his struggle with prescription drugs with little explanation and recounts the day of his death. Overall, he is presented as a misunderstood, talented recluse with a kind, quiet nature. The narrative is occasionally bogged down by detailed discussions of contracts and music-business wheeling and dealing. Full-color photos appear on almost every spread, presenting accessible and varied portions of text. The story of the man and his music is well told, and this offering is less formulaic than typical series biographies.—*Richelle Roth*, Boone County Public Library, KY



### Booklist

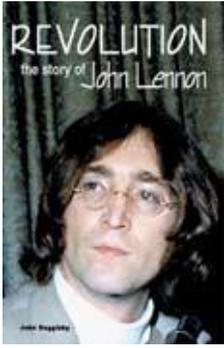
November 15, 2007

**Reggae Poet: The Story of Bob Marley.** Miller, Calvin Craig (Author) Nov 2007.

128 p. Morgan Reynolds, library edition, \$27.95. (1599350718). 782.4216.

He was raised in a Jamaican slum, his music was rooted in his community, and he was dead by age 36. Yet Bob Marley was beloved worldwide, and his popularity rages on. This highly readable biography begins with a dramatic concert during which Marley's life was under threat. The book then shifts to a chronological arrangement, beginning with Marley's unhappy childhood as the biracial son of a Brit and a Jamaican farm girl. Marley found himself in music and in his band, the Wailers, which achieved immediate success in Jamaica, and eventually far beyond. His reggae always had a political side, and Miller does a fine job showing the effect the music and the politics had on each other. He also

skillfully weaves in the complicated topic of the Rastafarian religion and the part ganja (marijuana) plays in it, and he doesn't hesitate when explaining Marley's complicated romantic life. The black-and-white and color photos are well chosen, though there could have been more. Quotes are sourced, and a time line and bibliography are appended. — *Ilene Cooper*



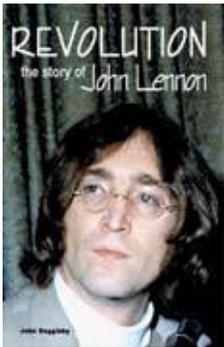
**The Horn Book Guide**

Fall 2007

**Duggleby, John Revolution: The Story of John Lennon**

176 pp. Morgan LE ISBN 978-1-59935-034-9 \$27.95

(4) YA This sturdy, upbeat biography looks at the “intellectual” Beatle’s short, whirlwind life, from adolescent upstart to rock star to peace activist to assassinated icon. The book contains a few inaccuracies, but it rarely ceases to be interesting, thanks to Duggleby’s generosity with examples of Lennon’s famously quick wit. Archival photos appear throughout. - *Timeline*, websites. Bib., ind. NB

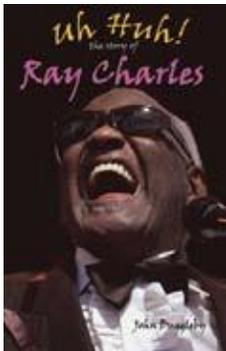


**School Library Journal**

April, 2007

DUGGLEBY, John. Revolution: The Story of John Lennon. 176p. photos. reprints. bibliog. chron. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. Apr. 2007. PLB \$27.95. ISBN 978-1-59935-034-9. LC 2006033855.

Gr 7 Up—This title adequately pieces together the events and people in the star’s eccentric life. Drawing on the fact that Lennon was born during World War II and describing his unsettled early childhood with his flighty mother and later with his overprotective Aunt Mimi, the author touches on the major moments in Lennon’s life without going into too much detail. Readers will learn about his early fascination with Elvis Presley; his pre-Beatles days with the Quarry Men; and how George Harrison, Paul McCartney, and Ringo Starr joined forces. Middle school students and those just developing an interest in the Beatles would find this book a solid introduction to the rock-and-roll legend, but the relationship entanglements, particularly those involving John, Yoko Ono, and the other members of the band, would be most appreciated by older teens and adults. Duggleby doesn’t reveal anything about Lennon that fans haven’t known for years, but he does a fine job of compressing a full and fascinating life into this compact volume. A smattering of black-and-white and full-color photos appear throughout.—*Sarah Krygier*, Solano County Library, Fairfield, CA



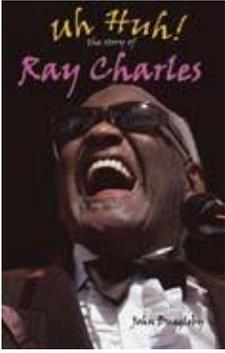
**School Library Journal**

October 2005

**Carter G. Woodson Honor Book**

DUGGLEBY, John. Uh Huh!: The Story of Ray Charles. 160p. photos. reprints. bibliog. chron. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2005. PLB \$26.95. ISBN 1-931798-65-6. LC 2005001287.

Gr 6 Up—An engaging and highly readable account of a musician whose talent has influenced not only generations of musicians, but pop music itself. Beginning with Charles’s early years as a fatherless child learning piano at the feet of a barroom entertainer and ending with his posthumous Grammy award in 2004, the author portrays the stubborn, hard-working performer as both a product of his era and an innovator. To his credit, Duggleby does not mythologize Charles and discusses with candor the difficult subjects of marital infidelity and drug abuse. However, this is not, despite what the title claims, just the story of Ray Charles. Sprinkled throughout this excellent biography are sidebars and short articles about nearly every aspect of American music culture—from James Taylor to the Beatles to a history of soul, the Grammy Awards, and the California Raisins. Photos, in color and in black and white, appear throughout. A wonderful introduction to Charles as well as a great short history of African-American pop music.—*Steve Baker*, Kewaskum Public Library, WI



### **VOYA**

August 2005

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Carter G. Woodson Honor Book

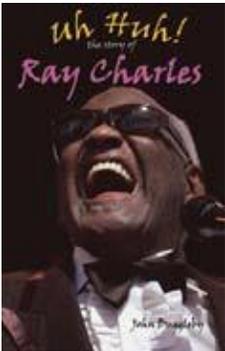
Duggleby, John. *Uh Huh! The Story of Ray Charles*. Morgan Reynolds, 2005. 160p. \$24.95. 1-931798-65-6. Index. Photos. Biblio. Source Notes. Chronology.

This timely biography does a credible job exploring the complex personality of musical legend Ray Charles. Using chronological structure and many color photographs, Duggleby gives equal time to Charles's impoverished Florida childhood, his early career imitating jazz and blues artists, and his later successes as a pianist, singer, composer, and as the father of the musical genre soul.

Text boxes explore related topics such as Braille and the Grammys. The book is current through

2005, when Charles won posthumously eight Grammys for his album *Genius Loves Company*. To his credit, Duggleby does not whitewash Charles's lifestyle, including information about Charles's extramarital affairs and his heroin addiction. Furthermore he builds a convincing case for the significant contributions Charles made to twentieth-century music, influencing the Beatles, Elvis, and other musical icons.

Overall the book reads smoothly, a quick pick for biography and music lovers, as well as an appealing selection for African American biography assignments. Not overly sophisticated, the writing is suited to a slightly younger audience than some subject matter (Charles' quotes often include mild cursing), which might work well for high- low readers. At times, it is confusing in precise timing of events. A chronology is included, although Charles's birthday is incorrect there (correct in the text), but no discography. These flaws aside, the book is recommended for schools and libraries that serve older teens, especially where biographies are in demand. —*Caitlin Augusta*



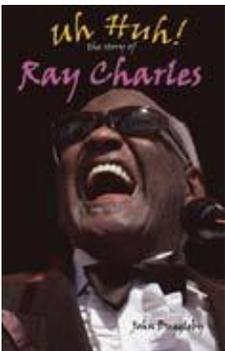
### **Booklist**

June 1, 2005

Carter G. Woodson Honor Book

Duggleby, John. *Uh Huh! The Story of Ray Charles*. June 2005. 160p. illus. index. Morgan Reynolds, lib. ed., \$24.95 (1-931798-65-5). 782.42164. Gr. 9-12.

Ray Charles' early life was full of tragedies: poverty, blindness, and the death of family members. But by age 16, he was making a living as a musician. Duggleby traces Charles' long career and displays a sensitivity to the events surrounding his life (including his bitter battles with heroin and alcohol addiction), as well as a genuine understanding of his music and the breadth of his musical influences. Sidebars on "race" music, Braille, the Grammys, soul, and rock and roll enrich the narrative. An attractive design includes many photographs, often effectively sepia-toned. Charles' weathered and powerful voice still sings, and this effective biography shows the triumphs and tragedies that shaped this towering figure in American popular music. —*GraceAnne A. DeCandi*



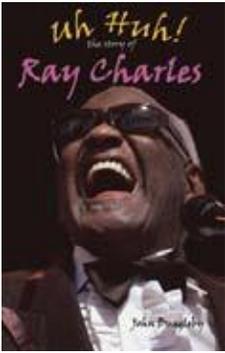
### **The Horn Book Guide**

2005

Carter G. Woodson Honor Book

Duggleby, John *Uh Huh!: The Story of Ray Charles* 160 pp. Morgan LE ISBN 1-931798-65-6 \$26.95

(3) YA Musical giant, savvy businessman, recovered addict, and lousy husband, the late Ray Charles still dazzles in this enthusiastic warts-and-all treatment. Sidebars on related topics broaden the context of his rise from poor blind boy to American icon, but what gives this book its soul is Charles himself, extensively quoted throughout. - *Timeline, websites. Bib., ind.*



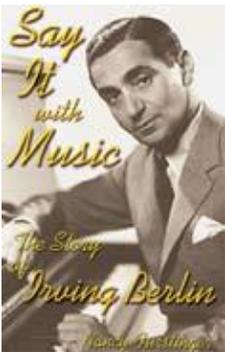
### **Young Adult Reviewers of Southern California**

*Recommended Titles for Young Adults*

October-November, 2005 Vol. 43 Number 4

Duggleby, John. *Uh Huh! The Story of Ray Charles*. Morgan Reynolds, 2005. 160p. 978-1-931798-65-5.

Ray Charles was attracted to music at an early age when he discovered the delights of a piano. His realm of recordings and performances has covered several styles of music. Beside straightforward biography requests, this title can be suggested to those researching disabilities or music careers. - *E.M. Roublow, LAPL, San Pedro Branch*

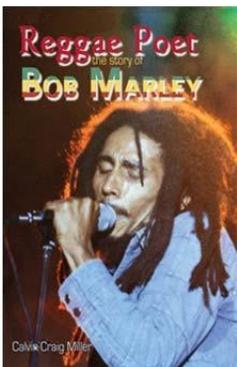


### **School Library Journal**

October 2003

Furstinger, Nancy. *Say It with Music: The Story of Irving Berlin*. July 2003. 128p. illus. Morgan Reynolds, lib. ed., \$21.95 (1-931798-12-5).

Gr. 5-9. The immigrant experience and a history of the early popular-music business in the United States form the background for this biography of one of America's best-known songwriters. In well-researched detail, Furstinger describes how Berlin developed from a youngster who sang other people's songs to a sought-after songwriter for Broadway and Hollywood. The lasting importance of his contributions is made evident, not only with the popularity of songs like "White Christmas," but also with the repeated singing of "God Bless America" following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Written in a lively style, the text is clearly documented with source notes, and well-placed, black-and-white photographs appear throughout. This is a more thorough account of Berlin's life than Thomas Streissguth's biography with the same title (Carolrhoda, 1995) —*Renee Eisenberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ.*

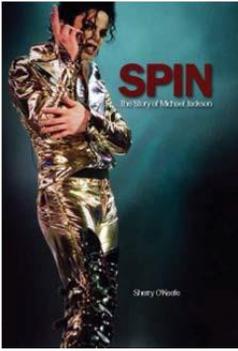


### **School Library Journal**

February, 2008

MILLER, Calvin Craig. *Reggae Poet: The Story of Bob Marley*. 128p. photos. reprints. bibliog. chron. index. notes. Web sites. CIP. Morgan Reynolds. 2007. PLB \$27.95. ISBN 978-1-59935-071-4. LC 2007027476.

Gr 9 Up—Marley and his larger-than-life story are adequately portrayed in this serviceable biography. Miller describes his subject's birth in the Jamaican village of Nine Miles in 1945 to a black mother and white father. His mixed racial heritage and poverty made his childhood difficult. He began playing music and singing at an early age and later formed the Wailers with a childhood friend. The band became known for a distinctive reggae sound that made them famous around the world. The clearly written text provides a solid background by discussing Jamaican history, Rasta beliefs, and contemporary political events. The book is evenhanded, showing Marley's successes as well as his flaws, including his extramarital affairs, and also mentions his use of marijuana and an assassination attempt on his life. Black-and-white and a few color photographs add to the narrative, and source notes that identify the origins of the quotes appear throughout.—*Kristen Oravec, Stephen S. Wise Elementary School, Los Angeles*



## VOYA

O'Keefe, Sherry. *Spin: The Story of Michael Jackson*. Morgan Reynolds, 2010. 144p. \$28.95. Oversize pb. 978-1-59935-135-3.

On June 25th, 2009 most of the civilized world and indeed, undoubtedly many parts of the uncivilized world, were rocked by the news of Michael Jackson's death. So much so, for the better part of an hour Google was unable to process queries regarding the King of Pop and speculation over his demise crashed Twitter altogether. Love him or hate him, few can deny the genius of Michael Jackson, as he nearly single-handedly shattered many of the formidable barriers for African American performers. By insisting on total control of his creative output, he not only redefined pop culture in music, fashion and dance, but also considerably raised the bar on the production of music videos with his MTV release of *Thriller* in 1983. O'Keefe's book describes in detail Jackson's struggles with addiction, family, fortune, and fame, as well as the underpinnings regarding his health, eccentricities and accusations of pedophilia during his final years. Although told in exacting chronological order, one might get the sense this text may have been hastily edited, as similar passages sometimes appear too close together. On the upside, it's a fairly easy read and numerous full-sized color pictures help to illustrate not only Jackson's story, but also his dramatic physical transformation. A succinct timeline, sources by chapter and a bibliography are provided as well. Since Jackson's legendary notoriety and musical appeal apparently cross boundaries of both age and gender, this text is likely to appeal to a wide-ranging teen audience.—*Judy Brink-Drescher*.