

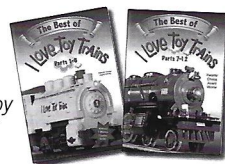
Welcome to an all-new, action-packed John Deere video adventure series for kids.

- Discover the important role bees play in the growing process.
- Tour County Line Orchard where we check out the apples and watch how they make donuts.
- Zip over to the Los Angeles Equestrian Center where kids learn to jump and ride horses.
- Visit the famous Santa Anita Race Track where race horses work out.
- Go to the Peg Perego factory and see how the John Deere Gator riding vehicle is made.
- Plus five new songs by our favorite singer/songwriter, James Coffey.

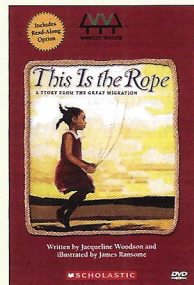
**35 minutes**

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From the producers of the *I Love Toy Trains Series*



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### This Is the Rope ★★★

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-79048-2.

An iconographic-animated adaptation of author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator James Ransome's 2013 picture book, *This Is the Rope* focuses on the "Great Migration" of African-Americans from the rural South into more urban Northern states. The simple story follows the journey of a rope found under a shady sweet-smelling South Carolina pine, which grandpa uses to tie the family belongings to the car for the move to New York. Once in the city, the family hangs dried flowers to remind them of home and uses the rope to air-dry diapers, as a leash for a toy duck, and during skipping games with new friends. Following successive generations through family photos of graduation and pregnancy, the story culminates in a lesson about tying a hardy sailor's knot ("You want whatever you make or do in your life to last..."), coupled with a buoyant family reunion. Featuring narration by Channie Waites, music by Toshi Reagon, and a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

and his dragon pal Norville enjoy various learning-based escapades in this four-episode compilation from the Nick Jr. original preschool series. "Naptime for Borgelorp" finds Wally helping buddy Ogre Doug by babysitting his tiny pet Borgelorp. The wildly energetic Borgelorp is not ready for his nap, so Wally seeks help from local friends and uses the daily letter "S" to sort things out with his magical stick, conjuring a "soaring sock" to tire Borgelorp out. Mischievous little Bobgoblin wreaks havoc in "Victor the Villain," joining forces with the titular comic book (but only mild) evildoer, while Wally and Norville—role-playing as Wonder Dragon and Mighty Troll after a vigorous game of Viking volleyball—must stop them from throwing others' stuff into an ice volcano. Also featuring "Castle Caper" and "The Switching Stone," this fun and fanciful educational series is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### WordWorld: Birthday Party! ★★★

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$6.99. PBS Home Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-250-6.

Developed in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education, this five-story compilation, from the Emmy-winning PBS Kids series featuring rudimentary computer animation, is built around the running theme of birthday fun. An unseen narrator tells viewers about the denizens of WordWorld, a colorful realm populated by mostly anthropomorphic animals and items, often comprised of the letters forming their names. "Happy Birthday, Dog" finds the titular pup a bit discouraged when he has to remind his friends of his special day—not realizing, of course, that the gang are all working on a surprise party organized by Bear. A standout segment has rude chef Pig eating the cake earmarked for a birthday celebration, but he is fortunately redeemed by using his recipe

book to create a new concoction with letters. The occasionally unmannerly portly swine is also featured in "Pig's Present," spying on his nephews as they assemble letters to make him a birthday gift, and "The Rainbow Birthday Cake," in which he helps Duck to develop a cool cake with very fancy frosting. Also including "Bit By Bit" and "Bugs to the Rescue!," this budget-priced program is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

### On Tender Hooks ★★★

(2013) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Kate Shenton's documentary about people who practice body suspension—i.e., being hoisted into the air on cables, via hooks inserted into their skin—will certainly cause many viewers to squirm. The sequences capturing the process—carefully making incisions into which hooks are placed—are graphic. But *On Tender Hooks* is not exploitative: Shenton is clearly trying to understand the motives behind this strange ritual. Not surprisingly, they're varied. For some, it engenders a sense of community, particularly since body suspension requires a high degree of trust in other people. Others find that being suspended allows them to overcome trauma and experience release from emotional pain. And there are those for whom it's simply the next logical step after body piercing. Body suspension attracts a great deal of suspicion and scorn from outsiders, and is too readily associated with notions of perversion and sexual deviance. Shenton aims to overturn those misconceptions, while also providing an approximation of the actual experience by undergoing it herself—a process that the camera records.



Definitely not for the squeamish, this is still an intriguing exploration of a little-known, and even less appreciated, subculture. Extras include audio commentary by Shenton, and three short films. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### Demystifying the Book of Revelation

★★★

(2015) 169 min. DVD: \$89.95. Paraclete Press. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61261-635-3.

In this series of six lectures, Father Bill Burton, OFM, offers an excellent antidote to the bizarre interpretations of the last book of the New Testament that have proliferated over the last century and a half (repeatedly leading to "End of Days" predictions). Burton emphasizes that Revelation must be understood both in terms of the apocalyptic genre (which situates it within the Jewish prophetic tradition, particularly the Book of Daniel), and in the context of its own time, namely a period of Roman domination looked upon as analogous to the Babylonian captivity. Burton takes a sober, scholarly approach (with occasional pauses for a personal anecdote), delivering a voluminous amount of historical data and scriptural exegesis that might occasionally overwhelm some viewers. But his direct, unpretentious delivery—accompanied by illustrative graphics and artwork—ultimately makes the material quite accessible, while the segments demolishing the currently popular "Rapturist" reading and the related *Left Behind* school are especially welcome. Also compelling is Burton's insistence that Revelation should be understood, not decoded—embraced as an admonition to remain steadfast in the face

of tribulation, not taken as an enigmatic key to unlock answers to questions that Jesus, elsewhere in Scripture, warned should not be asked. DVD extras include a discussion guide. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### GFA: The Easter Collection ★★★

(2014) 98 min. DVD: \$14.99. Gospel Films Archive (dist. by Vision Video).

Part of the Gospel Films Archive series, *The Easter Collection* compiles a quartet of short Christian films (from various production houses active in the 1950s and '60s) centering on Jesus Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. "Dawn of Victory" (1966) is a straightforward dramatization of Christ's final hours and the ensuing confusion among followers after Jesus exits the tomb, covering the Crucifixion from the perspective of two secret followers, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. In the rushed 12-minute "The Lord's Ascension" (1952)—the final episode in Family Films' *The Living Bible* series—the imagery feels almost incidental to the narration concerning the period between Christ's Crucifixion and Ascension. Much better is the "The Other Wise Man" (1969), a touching account of a Persian who intended to join the three magi in meeting the infant Jesus, but was thrown off course by his own kind act toward another; his adventures over the next 33 years in trying to see Jesus ends in a final, beautiful irony. The wild card in this collection is "The Antkeeper" (1966), writer-director Rolf Forsberg's surreal psychedelic allegorical tale (somewhat reminiscent of "bad trip" scenes from the era's B-movies) about an old man gardener who turns his son into an ant and sends him into the garden to deal with ants fighting amongst themselves (incidentally, Forsberg's 1964 "Parable"—another Christian allegory, this time set in a circus—was entered into the Library of

Congress's National Film Registry in 2012). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### I Believe in Easter ★★★

(2014) 50 min. DVD: \$19.99. Gary Wilkinson (dist. by Vision Video).

Filmmaker Gary Wilkinson's engaging documentary offers an informative look at the long historical and religious roots of the Easter holiday. The first part explores various links between pre-Christian (i.e., pagan) rituals celebrating the coming of spring and fertility, even connecting ancient myths about rabbits and birds with our contemporary Easter practices of dyeing eggs and buying chocolate bunnies. But Easter is also inseparable from the Jewish rite of Passover, and *I Believe in Easter* illuminates how the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament is a variation on the Passover theme. Just as Passover involved the sacrifice of a lamb and spilling of its blood to ward off death, so the bloody killing of Christ was intended, in Christian terms, to release humanity from the finality of death. By extension, the eating of bread and drinking of wine—which Christ associates with being filled with the Holy Spirit—grows out of the practice of consuming the slaughtered lamb. Detailing the rest of Christ's story (i.e., the Lamb of God's return from the dead) while also examining other historic beliefs that were predominant in Israel, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Once We Were Slaves ★★★

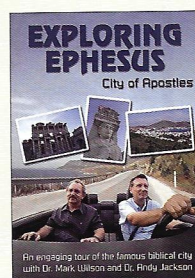
(2014) 27 min. DVD: \$9.99. Vertical Church Films (dist. by Vision Video).

Filmmaker Dallas Jenkins's dramatic short film creates a backstory for the two thieves famously crucified alongside Jesus Christ. Here, the Jewish prisoners are lifelong friends: one a rebel who resisted the Roman occupation, the other a go-along-to-get-along character who simply wants to marry and live a long life. But when fate intervenes and the two commit a crime of revenge against a Roman, the pair wind up becoming a major footnote to Christian history as the men who will engage in a dramatic dialogue with the dying Jesus. Well-acted, this effective rendering of a key episode recounted in the New Testament won the Best Short Film award at the 2014 Churches Making Movies Festival. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Exploring Ephesus: City of Apostles ★★★1/2

(2015) 58 min. DVD: \$14.99. Christian History Institute (dist. by Vision Video).

Vividly demonstrating the appeal of pilgrimages to lands described in holy texts, this documentary takes viewers to Ephesus (located in what is now Turkey), one of the world's best-preserved excavated Greco-Roman cities and a hub of early Christianity. Biblical experts Dr. Andrew Jackson and Dr. Mark Wilson (author of the unfortunately named *Biblical Turkey*) lead the way for an informative tour of the region where the apostle Paul, along with other leaders of the early church, lived and taught. The two men converse as they drive and trek through the terrain, contemplating the impressive ruins, modern-day elements, and other features. The easy rapport between these friends is evident as they recount history, mixing scriptural accounts with other sources to present a well-rounded view of the political, social, economic, and geophysical influences on the religions (including paganism) of the time. Part of the journey includes a boat trip to the Isle of Patmos, known as the place where Jesus foretold events described in Revelations. DVD extras include bonus featurettes, and a music video. Well-produced, engaging, and of interest for both its historical and religious content, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)



## SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

### Big Moccasin ★★★1/2

(2015) 65 min. DVD: \$159; public libraries & high schools; \$289; colleges & universities. DRA. Dark Hollow Films. PPR.

A fascinating documentary about a vanishing way of life on a stretch of Southwest Virginia in the Appalachian Valley, *Big Moccasin*