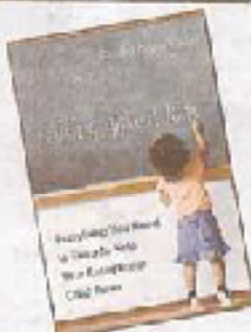


READ WORTHY

HOW-TO BOOK OF THE WEEK



TITLE: "Raising Gifted Kids: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Exceptional Child Thrive"
AUTHOR: Barbara Klein, PhD
PUBLISHER/PRICE: Amazon / \$16.95

Purpose: How to avoid the pitfalls of the pressure to achieve, while helping your child make the most of special talents.

Author's credentials: Klein has doctorates in both clinical psychology and early childhood education. Her private practice is dedicated to assessing, counseling and assisting with the special educational needs of gifted children. She has raised two gifted children of her own.

Excerpt: "Parenting is a challenge for all parents. But parents of gifted children face more challenges and have a greater opportunity to raise children who will really make a difference to our complicated, modern world. Specifically, you face serious challenges helping develop your gifted child's potential."

Effectiveness: Klein's devotion to the emotional and social plight of gifted kids and their parents is evident from page one. She pleads with parents to remember that a child is still a child, no matter how advanced, and still needs sensible, caring guidance. Her passion can cloud the writing at times: She gets so caught up in cautioning what not to do — either parading the child around like a trophy, or downplaying gifts to appear "normal" — that she tends to merely scratch the surface of the right things to do. Parents seeking concrete road maps may be disappointed — they're often told to ask a professional or look inward for answers, which rather defeats the purpose of reading the book. But numerous case histories reassure that you're not alone, and are excellent indicators of how decisions might play out.

— KRISTIN TAVERA

Gifts for your 4-legged friends



ANIMAL HOUSE
DENISE FLAIM

It's safe to say that our companion animals enjoy the holidays, if only for the potential of gravy-flooded leftovers.

But for the humans in their lives, stress is as much part and parcel of the season as lolly berries and dreidels.

Before procrastination takes hold, here is a smattering of critter-related gifts for the animals on your list, not to mention their humans.

Have pet, will travel.

Dog and cat carriers have always been with us — it's the zippy wheeled versions that are the newest twist. For little 'uns — up to 15 pounds — the Z226a pet carrier has a lot to recommend it, including a den-like atmosphere, an aluminum frame that doubles as a car seat, a removable heavy-duty fabric insert with mesh panels for ventilation and visibility, side pockets for stashing treats and sanities, and a quad wheel system that climbs stairs. (The carriers are not, however, airline safe.) Available for \$150 from Nordstrom, or visit zucac.com for more retailers.



Zuca bags work well as carrying cases for small dogs.

Ahoy, collie. Even before "Pirates of the Caribbean," skulls and crossbones were chic. Jolly Roger-themed collars, leashes and harnesses in both black and pink backgrounds are pretty much irresistible. Available for \$50 for the set at trixieandpea.net.com. And if that's not enough buccanera bling for you, check out the crystal skull charms, at \$35 each.

Kitty pacifiers. Blanket-sucking is a hassle but relatively common problem among otherwise dignified felines who were separated from their mothers too soon and, lacking opposable thumbs, look for something else to satisfy their oral fixations. Enter the Calsifier, a seven-inch



How about a Calsifier pillow, as in pacifier, get it? For kitties in need of something to suck on.

innocent-looking pillow that, on closer inspection, sports a furry usum substitute, complete with discreet nipples. Available in a variety of fabrics and patterns, from jacquards to plaids, for \$29.50 from calsifier.com.

Bye, bye, birdies. Central Park has a share of unusual birds. Pale Male the red hawk, least of all. "In the Cathedra Seat," a new feline-centric "natural sound documentary" on DVD, captures some less fearsome feathered folk for your cat's viewing pleasure, from Canada geese to pigeons to even a white egret. Available for \$14.95 from splitmilkproductions.com.

Bubblenecking delay. Bobbleheads aren't just for dashboards anymore. Capitalizing on the resurgence of these kitschy nothings, bobbypets.com can create a spookily realistic bobble version of your favorite dog or cat. (caveat: Unless you're willing to pay primo for rush delivery, these cannot be ordered in time for the holidays.) Available in two sizes — regular (\$134.95) and mini (\$79.95) — these custom bobbleheads also can be made to resemble the human of your choice.



Put your dog or cat on the dashboard at bobbypets.com



A blue cat platter for feline treats.

What's next, eye of newt?

Everything may taste better with cat hair in it, but some people can't handle the truth. Among those that can, this handpainted platter won't cause anyone to bat an eyelash. Available for \$22 from carnegieismad.com.

Wired woofers. Keeping real animals in your household takes a lot of work. Maintaining Pctz takes just a few keystrokes. Available for Game Boy Advance, PC and Nintendo DS, the Dogz video game lets you train, walk, groom, dress and otherwise cuddle a cyber-canine from a variety of breeds. If a hound doesn't do it for you, watch for other creatively spelled titles, including Catz, Horsez, and Hamsters. Prices vary depending on format; available from pctz.com.

Get-up, and go. What would the holidays be without kitschy costumes? Take your pick among the wearables at santasuits.com, from "Ciddy Up Snowman," who rides your ponch saddle and all, to the vaguely sacrilegious "Slalom Dog" costumes, including yamulke and tails.

Bad dog, bad dog, whatcha gonna do? Wrong reality show, but you get the idea. The four DVDs of the "Animal Rescue" box set are each devoted to heroic humans battling out a specific species — dogs, cats, horses and sea creatures — and each includes a behind-the-scenes

photo gallery. From animalkes.cnet.com for \$19.98.

Fanny-packing. In this modern age, taking your dog for a walk requires all the accoutrements of a Napoleonic army camp. Seeking to make you fashionably organized, the Pawpular Pouch has compartments to stash leys, cell phone, doggy treats and poop-scooping baggies. The dog doesn't wear it, you do, which, admittedly, hardly seems fair. Available for \$22.99 from pawpularpouch.com.



A carry case for busy dogs and their humans.

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