

information, none of them would be a first purchase for teachers or parents. *Philomena Hauck* is Associate Professor and Director of the Education Materials Centre at the University of Calgary.

SEXUALITY AND THE YOUNG

A kid's first book about sex, Joani Blank. Illus. Marcia Quackenbush. Kids Can Press, 1985. 48 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919964-67-2.

How much? How soon? These are two dilemmas facing the responsible adult selector who must make a decision about a slim paperback designed for the 7-to-11-year-old. First published in the United States (1983), it has been the object of both controversy and praise as it tackles head-on the child's self-concept and curiosity about his/her body and the sexual pleasures it may afford. Answering questions which almost all inquisitive children have, the book in its frank and honest treatment of the subject matter is at times discomfiting to a somewhat inhibited reviewer.

There are advantages to speaking on subjects thought to be taboo at a certain age, when adults are present. The author and illustrator have chosen that age of childhood when much misinformation is bandied about, when there is a delight in giggling over what is thought to be "dirty", when there is a fear that maybe one is not normal and when there is a singular lack of tolerance for the one who is different. By discussing openly such topics as "touching", "feeling sexy (orgasm)", "masturbation", "sexual intercourse", and varying preferences in partners, the author alleviates hidden fears and promotes understanding of what may be too secret to talk about. Certainly if children are exposed to just enough correct information presented in a non-judgmental way, their whole attitude toward sexuality may assume a more balanced perspective. There is much room for thought and encouragement to ask questions. The author herself questions the reader who may respond at his/her own level of maturity.

Both the verbal and illustrative material are low key, honest, open, full of common sense and edged with humour. The pen and ink drawings are imaginative, whimsical, but not inaccurate. They are absolutely necessary to the commentary, but because of their occasionally specific nature, the adult reader again may feel uncomfortable. This issue is dealt with by author and illustrator early in the book. The author queries, "If you ask your mom or dad a question about sex, how will they look?" There follow six cartoonish reactions, the best of which shows part of an adult running away.

The writer establishes rapport with her readers at the beginning by speak-

ing directly to adults and children, inviting interchange of thoughts and information. The questions do not allow complacency. The topics develop naturally as the child is first invited to examine his/her body and decide what he likes best about it. Emphasis is on developing a sense of pleasure in oneself.

The chapter on masturbation comes disturbingly close to being a how-to-manual; yet, it conveys to the child that there is a normality to this behaviour which may be comforting. The chapter on partners simply and matter-of-factly explains different sexual preferences. Again text and illustration necessarily complement each other and enhance the objectivity.

A kid's first book about sex is good at what it does. However, its promotion will require a risk-taker in the school library world. Perhaps it will be most enjoyed when purchased personally and shared with a child who is judged ready by those who know him/her best.

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CLOTHES AND BUTTONS: HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The last great frontiersman, Leland Stowe. Paperjacks, Ltd., 1983. 253 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-7701-0251-4; ***Terry Fox: his story***, Leslie Scrivener. McClelland and Stewart, 1981. 176 pp. \$10.00 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-8017-4; ***The lure of the Labrador wild***, Dillon Wallace. Breakwater Books, 1977 (reprint of 1905 ed. published by F. Revell, New York). 285 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919948-88-3; ***It's Jake with me***, J.D. Geller. Paperjacks, Ltd., 1983. 225 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-7701-0270-0.

In his *Autobiography* Mark Twain remarked that biographers could capture only "the clothes and buttons" of their subjects, never the real persons beneath them. Perhaps too harsh and hopeless, as were many of Twain's judgments, his observation is borne out in the four volumes under review and suggests why the two autobiographical works, though no better written nor dealing with more intrinsically interesting characters, are so much more interesting, provocative, and satisfying than the efforts at biography.

The life of Manitoba trapper, farmer, bush-pilot, entrepreneur, and conservationist Tom Lamb is chronicled in Leland Stowe's *The last great frontiersman*. Lamb was born in 1898 at Moose Lake in northern Manitoba. Beyond Grade Three, his education came from contact with the Cree Indians who formed the majority of the region's inhabitants and from his experience as a trapper, teamster, and trader. "Break them in early and bring them up tough," was