

puppy love relationship reminiscent of Rose's love for the older Cora in Alice Munro's *Who do you think you are?*), Pearson allows both Eliza and her young readers a link with this frightening world of teenhood — a comforting assurance that (the horrors of dating and dances to the contrary) one may survive after all.

The most crucial link in *The daring game*, though, is one which Eliza forms with a peer and it is this relationship which is less surely drawn. Eliza befriends — much to everyone's surprise — the “problem” student, Helen — a girl whose boisterous and rebellious behaviour only thinly masks the insecurity of an unhappy home life. From this alliance grows the “daring game” of the title — a game which leads to Eliza's act of lying in order to protect Helen, who has gone outside the walls of the school on a dare. The ethical waters become truly muddied, but lest we are tempted to ponder the ethical perplexities of two wrongs occasionally making a right, the author whisks us away from the entire problem at rather short notice.

My sense of ethical unease is accompanied and intensified by a sense of political unease. Eliza's experience at Ashdown is clearly an upper-middle-class one; her father is an ophthalmologist who has just been invited to start an eye clinic at the Toronto General Hospital. How, then, is a reader to react to obvious bids for sympathy because of Eliza's relatively spare economic situation? “Eliza was fascinated. She'd never known anyone with servants before. Pam and Carrie must be as rich as some of the day-girls. You could tell by their clothes, and all the places they had been, that their families had more money than Jean's, Helen's and her own” (47). One shudders to think of the living conditions of children of less-than-ophthalmological parentage.

Pearson's *The daring game* offers sensitive and valuable insights into the process of growing up. But the fears and challenges of growing up are always, to a degree, determined by social factors such as class. Writers should be aware of this fact and should write with it in their hearts and minds, for not all of the troubled Helens in our society can squeeze into Ashdown Academy and tell their stories.

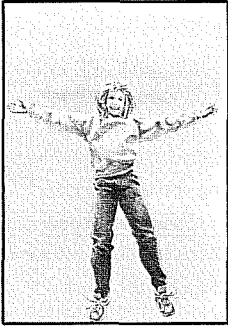
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IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

Starring Quincy Rumpel, Betty Waterton. Douglas & McIntyre, 1986. 115 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-048-0.

When *Quincy Rumpel* was published in 1984, Canadian readers were introduced to a new heroine, exuberant, irrepressible and very amusing. Her

life, although fraught with minor crisis, was nevertheless uncomplicated by the major traumas prevalent of today's realistic fiction.



In *Starring Quincy Rumpel*, Betty Waterton has re-focussed the family's fortunes. The mushroom farm in the garage has failed and Mr. Rumpel is now selling Rumpel Rebounders, a most appropriate commodity because the reader bounces in a literary sense from one episode to the next impelled by Quincy's determination to advertise the Rebounders on television.

The Rumpels demonstrate that it is possible to enjoy life without wealth or security. There is give and take among the siblings, and the parents for all their idiosyncrasies are warm and caring. When Mrs. Rumpel knocks herself unconscious by hitting her head on the chandelier while hula-hooping on a Rebounder, Mr. Rumpel thoughtfully places the last rose from the Rumpel rose bush on the tray of coffee and donuts he carries upstairs to her bedside. On another occasion, to spare Morris embarrassment, Quincy, Leah and their cousin Gwen obligingly shield him from view with a poncho so he can change his soccer shorts right way round.

As in the previous book, Betty Waterton shows an intimate understanding of children in the 1980's. She knows their language and the importance of conforming to peer group fads while projecting one's own unique individuality. Quincy's preoccupation with her clothes, her hair and her ear rings are part of being a twelve-year-old. Her quickly passing infatuation with Morris' soccer coach and the touch of nostalgia associated with her last Hallowe'en are signs that Quincy is leaving childhood, but she approaches adolescence with the attitude that "growing older wasn't going to be so bad, after all."

The book reads like a fast-moving comic strip. Simple incidents are turned into hilarious happenings. Supporting characters, like Aunt Fan, are usually larger than life, but the caricatures are not malicious.

One of the book's strengths — its appeal to today's ten-to-twelve-year-olds — may also be its weakness. It is so contemporary and trendy, with references to people like Sally Ride and Wayne Gretzky, to present crazes such as T-shirt messages, it may not survive beyond this generation of children. In this respect Quincy Rumpel may be an ephemeral heroine. Nevertheless, her return in *Starring Quincy Rumpel* will delight her followers and increase her popularity.

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