

DRAGONS AND MAGIC, GHOSTS AND A BIRTHDAY PRESENT

Shivers in your nightshirt: eerie stories to read in bed, Children's Writers' Workshop of Nova Scotia. Illus. Kathy R. Kaulback. Children's Writers' Workshop, 1986. 106 pp. \$5.50 paper ISBN 0-969-2342-1-X; **The dragon and other Laurentian tales**, Claude Jasmin. Oxford University Press, 1987. 77 pp. \$9.95 paper ISBN 0-19-540574-9; **The magic pears**, Shiu L. Kong and Elizabeth K. Wong. Kensington Educational, 1986. 100 pp. \$15.00 paper ISBN 0-9692005-3-6; **Stories to grow on: metaphors for change**, Child Care Graduates of St. Lawrence College Saint-Laurent. Illus. Students of Portsmouth Public School, Kingston. Quarry Press, 1986. 48 pp. \$7.95 ISBN 0-919627-03-X.

With winter setting in, it's time to gather the kids around a roaring fire and share stories along with that bowl of popcorn before bedtime. Top of the list is *Shivers in your nightshirt*, an excellent collection of short stories bound to leave readers wide-eyed and checking over their shoulders. Enough chuckles are incorporated to relieve the tension of a wizard performing time-travel, a ghost guarding buried treasure, a werewolf appearing at camp, a murky pool of darkness devouring a twin brother, and a creature in the sea mist. At times thought-provoking, the stories are fast paced and well written often leaving the reader guessing the final outcome in the grand "Twilight Zone" fashion. This collection of tales will delight the grade 4 and up reader who always asks for "a really scary book."

For the less strong of heart, *The dragon and other Laurentian tales* is a collection of beautifully written stories about one man's experiences in the Laurentians. More a description of setting than plots of suspense, this book combines humour and believable characters exploring the natural and not-so-natural wonders of the Laurentians. The reader is asked to suspend belief, as in most tales, but one story of a mouse spewing messages on pieces of bark is a bit hard to accept. Overall, the book is well written and provides the reader with insightful and painterly views of the landscape. An important addition to any collection, this book preserves the yarns spun in a region of Quebec.

A sampling of Chinese folklore is presented in 20 short stories of *The magic pears*. Written by two educators with the purpose of adding "to an increasingly diverse and imaginative body of literature that reflects the richness of our common multicultural legacy," *The magic pears* covers a wide range of subjects and periods in China's history, and includes fables, myths, and brain-teasers showing the folly of mankind, the wonders of nature, the strength of the human spirit, and the compassion of deities. *The magic pears* is written in a calm, clear style which is subtle in its manipulation of the reader's mood. Cool and refreshing like a melon and mint salad, this collection is a welcome

addition to a multicultural or folklore collection for the upper elementary student.

Stories to grow on, an anthology of short stories written by Child Care Graduates of St. Lawrence College Saint-Laurent, is intended to provide an additional form of communication between children and adults. Patterned on the success of veteran Michael Burn's technique of using stories as a starting point for discussing problems, the stories have been tested with children and evaluated by an editorial board. A curriculum guide (not reviewed) is also available. The stories would be best told to a child rather than read, as the writing lacks the polished presentation of skilled authors and needs the embellishment of storytelling techniques. The collection covers a wide range of situations: co-operation between family members, friendships, stealing, adoption, and divorce, to name a few. While not intended to be "didactic thumps" which "bump into a child's life like so much lesson-giving castor oil," the stories are at times just that.

In "The birthday present", wanting to please his mother, Timmy steals a scarf for her birthday. Once out of the store, Timmy begins to think about what he has done and remembers a sermon where the preacher said that "God didn't like people who did bad things and that He would make them sorry." Not wanting "God to hate me", he returns the scarf. The anthology is obviously meant to be used by professionals, not made available to the general reader. The quality of the stories is uneven, but may provide ideas on how to approach a troubled child.

To varying degrees, each of these four books lacks the quality of production and sophistication of design/illustration found in other books of this genre. The teacher/librarian may have to take an extra step to entice young readers with these books. However, once past the front cover, the reader is bound to enjoy the adventures/tales contained within.

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Le zoo enchanté. Pierre Mathieu. Illus. Philippe Dupas. Saint-Boniface, Manitoba: Éditions des Plaines, 1987. Non-paginé. 6,95\$ broché. ISBN 0-920944-74-4.

Plutôt que d'un zoo, qui traditionnellement désigne un emplacement où sont groupés des animaux "sauvages," il s'agit, dans ce petit recueil, de bêtes