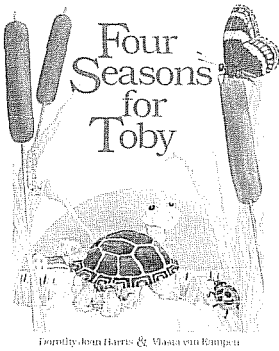


## MINI-REVIEWS

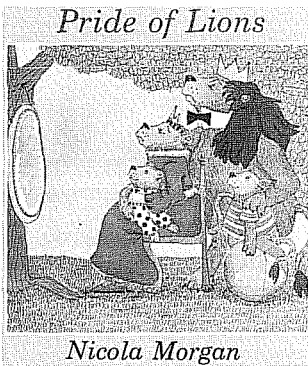


**Four seasons for Toby.** Dorothy Joan Harris. Illus. Vlasta van Kampen. North Winds Press, 1987. 32 pp. \$11.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-71677-8.

In this tale about Toby, a persistent little turtle who leaves the safety of his home pond to plod around the farm in search of the four seasons, a young child will identify with Toby's impatience and curiosity, and will even enjoy the gentle joke that while Toby is travelling, the seasons come to his pond anyway.

Vlasta van Kampen's watercolours satisfyingly complement Dorothy Joan Harris's text; both impart information about nature in an organic and appealing way. Seasonal change in plants and animals is portrayed with scientific accuracy and always from Toby's ground level viewpoint, making the book a useful introduction to nature study with young children. Teachers and parents might note that the fascinating endpaper maps of Toby's route could inspire young listeners to make maps of their own nature walks.

The impact of seasonal change not only on the insects, birds, small animals, and plants of garden and roadside, but also on children's outdoor activities, emphasises that human beings are still, despite widespread urbanization, very much part of nature.



**Pride of lions.** Nicola Morgan. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1987. Unpag. \$13.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88902-838-9.

According to the rules of the hunt developed in medieval England, every grouping of animals from larks to lions had to be identified by a proper and particular term. Although many of these "nouns of assemblage", such as a "litter" of puppies or a "gaggle" of geese, are still retained in Modern English, many have been forgotten. James Lipton, in his classic *An exaltation of larks* (Penguin, 1977) made a case

for reviving some of the more archaic terms because of their authenticity, poetic charm, and humour.

In *Pride of lions*, Nicola Morgan introduces fourteen of these ancient terms of assemblage, from the familiar "school of fish" to the fanciful "leap of leopards." Her formulaic and predictable text irresistibly invites preschoolers to chime in, while her merry visual puns delight older children, as oxen in an eggcup grin out over the caption, "A yoke of oxen," and a full-page peapod bursts at the seam with smiling killer whales. All readers will enjoy the cleverly chosen alliterative adjectives and cartoon-like watercolours which reflect and explore the connotations of each term; my five-year-old son enjoyed the "gang" of "easy-going, eligible" elk lounging, leather-jacketed, at a street corner.

A small quibble about typesetting and text design: considering that this book is aimed at younger children, conventions of the sentence should have been followed, with periods and capital letters in the correct place.

As children giggle over the "crash" of rhinos, they are simultaneously learning an ancient idiom and exploring the playful and poetic aspects of meaning in language. Teachers and parents would find this book useful in inspiring children to collect and create terms of assemblage for other groupings of animals, people, and things.

**Cathy Simpson**, *a former elementary teacher, is now a full-time mother and chairperson of the local library board in Lewisporte, Newfoundland.*