

to the look of excitement and adventure, although Jenny's world has neither.

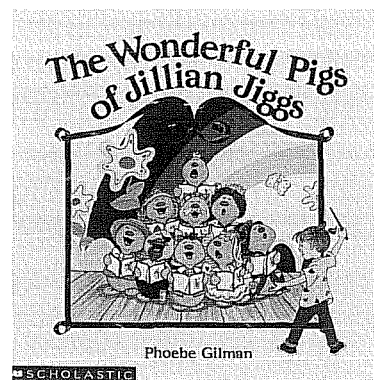
Like Jenny, the young hero of Marion Mineau's *The flowers* must learn to cope with disappointment at not getting what he wants as quickly as he wants it. Promised a corner of the garden in which he can plant what he likes, Paul waits anxiously, in one of the few humorous passages of the text, for the flowers to come up. Of course they don't, not immediately, although Paul tries one ingenious method for making his garden blossom. The lesson is one of patience, of respect for process, a valid enough lesson but treated here a little too pedantically. The book would have been much more satisfying had it rewarded Paul, and the reader, with blooming flowers. Instead, the story drops off abruptly with a horticultural lesson by the boy's mother and an assurance that the flowers will eventually come up.

Veronika Martenova Charles's drawings add some humour. A lighter touch in the story's telling would have added greatly to this Black Moss Press book, as would the use of sharper, cleaner colour in the production stage.

Kathleen Corrigan, a former editor at the OISE press, is the author of *Emily*, *Umily*.

FOR THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

The wonderful pigs of Jillian Jiggs Phoebe Gilman. Illus. author. North Winds Press, 1988. 36 pp., \$13.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-7168-1; **Down by Jim Long's stage**. Al Pittman. Breakwater Books. **Circus days**. Roger Paré with Bertrand Gauthier. Illus. Roger Paré. Annick Press, 1988. Unpag., \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth paper. ISBN 1-55037-021-9, 1-55037-020-0; **Scary poems for rotten kids**. sean o'huiagan. Illus. John Fraser and Scott Hughes. Black Moss Press, 1988. Unpag., paper. ISBN 0-88753-087-7.



Jillian Jillian Jillian JIGGS! is a chant heard frequently among children in child care centres who are familiar with Phoebe Gilman's first book, *Jillian Jiggs*. It is not surprising that this book is quite popular too.

The content of the book is appealing to young children in that they are interested in making things, and the older the children, the more interested they are in "products" which can be sold to make some money. This book is more ap-

appropriate for four and five-year-olds; the characters are realistic and the story is enticing to children in its predictable and rhythmic patterning. When Jillian decides she can't part with her pigs and thereby quickly changes her plan – from selling to giving lessons so everyone can still have a pig of her own – she shows a certain resiliency and opportunism. The illustrations reflect the text well. My students participated spontaneously in the chants and filling in the ends of the rhymes while I read. They thoroughly enjoyed the different pigs and their odd names, Clarissa, Blackerry Billy and Lavender Lilly. To see Jillian live on in another book certainly delights children, as do the instructions for making pigs. Surely many pigs will be made as a result of this story.

Down by Jim Long's stage, the award winning Newfoundland book originally written in 1976, is a specialty book about sea creatures, oceans, fish, and water animals. Used with younger children, within the larger context of a unit or theme on such areas as the above, will help to secure relevant and meaningful interest in a new area. Preschool children and five and six-year-olds will appreciate the intricate detail of a world underwater which will in all likelihood be quite unfamiliar to them. The language is appealing in that it offers the child an odd and varied new vocabulary to play with and introduces scientifically correct names for a whole variety of new creatures. The illustrations offer a pleasing selection of colour. Some introductory discussion about the author, Newfoundland, and the unit (fish, oceans etc.), as well as some comparative talk on what students can find in the lake or stream near their house will help to prime the children for such a book. Field trips to look at these animals will also help complement an integrated unit involving such a book.

Kindergarten children hearing Roger Paré's *Circus days* for the first time thoroughly enjoyed the subtle hilarious inconsistencies that appear throughout the book and came to look forward to the next page to discover what the next one would be. This book could be considered to be a specialty book or just a delightful lap book to be read in a cozy corner, or even quite appropriately, a bedtime book. Its simplicity endears itself marvelously to children in Kindergarten (who love to attempt to read it themselves!) or three and four-year-olds who are beginning to be more discriminating about text and illustrations. The complexity and length of the book are adaptable to a range of children and appeal to different ages for different reasons. Fantasy characters (the rabbit who pulls the man out of the hat) tickle children's sense of silliness while also encouraging them to look for the subtle inconsistencies in the illustrations. The illustrations are done with subtle colouring and with endearing characterization which work well with the text. The illustrations also serve to tell a little story in themselves and once children look closely they realize they will see something extra beyond the words. The language is concise, avoiding excessive detail and the words and phrases are pleasing to the ear. The large print words lends itself quite well to children who are learning

to read. Roger Paré has given us versatile books with which children can enjoy listening to and participating in developing their own reading skills.

Ghost stories, gory tales and scary poems! Children love to hear frightening (but not too frightening!) stories. These poems had encores for more and more. Most of the poems contained an element of familiarity (mosquitoes, body, breakfast) and children were able to accommodate the unfamiliar with the familiar. One important element, which takes only seconds is the discussion of the simple question of whether this is all real or not, which puts the undecided children at ease about whether or not this can really happen to them. I recommend that this book be read with older children, perhaps in a broad context of Halloween or a unit on fantasy figures. The poetry is versatile enough that the poems can be read at any time during any season. Children will enjoy writing or dictating their own poems as follow-up to this book, which is an excellent entrance into the world of print and language.

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UN TALENT PRÉCOCE

Dix-huit échelons plus bas.... Jean-Thierry Bourque. Montréal, Fides, 1988. 72 pp., 4,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-7621-1433-0.

Un premier roman à onze ans, qu'en peut-on augurer? *Dix-huit échelons plus bas*. . . est en effet l'oeuvre de Jean-Thierry Bourque qui, à onze ans, nous présente son héros Gontrand, à peine plus âgé que lui. Jeune garçon aussi aventurier qu'ingénieur, celui-ci découvre dans le jardin de sa nouvelle maison un passage souterrain ostensiblement creusé par des brigands. Mais le cactus géant à grandes épines, (dont Gontrand a fait venir les graines du Texas pour camoufler l'entrée du tunnel), risque d'engloutir le jeune aventurier.

Ces deux fils de l'histoire (celui des brigands et celui du cactus géant) sont en général menés avec habileté, entrelacés dans la trame d'une intrigue bien construite. Mais loin de faire une simple narration chronologique des événements, l'auteur se sert de différents moyens pour faire avancer son récit: correspondance, dialogues, titres de chapitres. . . Et il faut attendre le chapitre 4 avant d'apprendre que le trou que Gontrand veut boucher avec un cactus géant est à vrai dire l'entrée d'un passage secret. Bien avant ce chapitre, on a déjà découvert que ce cactus devient tellement énorme qu'en croissant par malchance à bord d'un Boeing 747, il a mis en danger la vie de tous les passagers. L'auteur sait donc tenir le lecteur en suspens, le faisant procéder de