

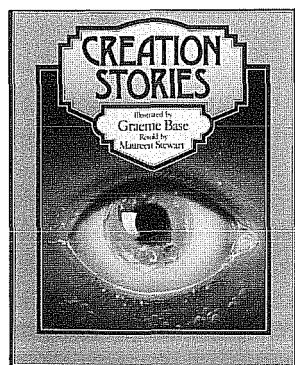
The wildlife 1 2 3: A nature counting book. Jan Thornhill. Greedy de Pencier, 1989. Unpag., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920775-39-X.

Jan Thornhill's newest book is just as delightful as her *Wildlife A B C: A nature alphabet book*. The bold vivid pictures catch the attention of children of every age. This book is an excellent way to introduce pre-schoolers to nature, from the common type of fish or animals to the more exotic varieties. Nine sparrows gathered at a kitchen window feeder is an every day occurrence even the youngest reader can get excited about. The older reader may want to find out more information about Lemurs. What a challenge – are there really 1000 wiggly tadpoles?

Each picture is uniquely bordered with the same number of animals found in the original picture – can you find the Panda playing peek-a-boo in the bamboo, or five tigers frisking in the tall grass?

The numbers are printed bold and black enhancing the illustrations and making learning easier. At the end of the book appear good nature notes. Jan Thornhill's wildlife art is rich in detail. This enchanting book is a must for the budding biologist or for that special pre-schooler with small hands.

Patricia Feltham is the children's librarian in Waterford, Ontario.



Creation stories. Illus. Graeme Base. Reteller Maureen Stewart. Stoddart, 1989. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-2334-X.

This delightful collection of stories on the creation of the world and mankind covers eleven different civilizations from the North American Indian to Vikings and Maoris. It is important for children to realize that the creation myth of their civilization is not the only one, and this book should stimulate children's (and adult's) curiosity about the nature of creation. The similarities between various myths are also striking: for example, a number of

them claim that the world came from an egg, while nearly all associate creation with light from darkness, dry land from the sea. This book therefore not only encourages a comparative approach, but could also lead to discussions about the nature of myth and man's need to translate cosmic events into myth and legend.

Not all the tales are as gentle as the Judaic. "In the beginning..." In fact most of them seem to believe in a world that begins with a big bang rather than a whimper. As might be expected, the most graphic is the Viking version with the Frost Giants who hack Ymew to death, then drown his relations in

his blood prior to mutilating his body to create the world: "they slashed, chopped, pushed and pulled his [Ymer's] flesh" to make the hills and valleys, used his blood for the seas, while teeth, toes and crushed bones made rocks and pebbles and his matted hair became trees. Such horrific recycling of the gods is an extreme example, but parallels exist in China where Pangu bursts out of his egg-like mass, and the creation of all the elements of the earth come from his body. All in all this book is to be highly recommended for both text and illustrations.

King Arthur: Tales of the young king. Connie Brim. Illus. Eugene Pawzuk. Hayes Publishing, 1989. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88625-236-9.



The story of Arthur of Britain has fascinated children and adults for over a thousand years and it is experiencing one of its major revivals in our own age, as can be seen in contemporary literature, films and art. Children particularly delight in the early years of Arthur, when he blossoms from insignificance to the greatest king ever. There is always room for yet another retelling of the well-known tale.

Eugene Pawzuk and Connie Brim concentrate with great success on the sword in the stone episode in the first half of this lavishly illustrated book. Many complications, such as Uther Pendragon's deceit in the illicit love affair with Igraine and the fact that Morgan is Igraine's daughter, are omitted, although they would help to explain Morgan's later treachery. In the second half, however, the tales are rather disjointed and too brief to create any unity: there is fight with "a strange knight", followed by the brief appearance of the Lady of the Lake, and the book concludes with a lesser known adventure with Acolon, Damas and Ontzlake. We are left with Morgan who has successfully deceived Arthur, captured his magic scabbard that will heal him and is now plotting Arthur's final downfall. Rather an abrupt and inconclusive ending, but perhaps there will be a sequel?

There are also some inconsistencies between text and illustrations: one has the impression that the latter is more important in this work (e.g., the author's name is omitted from the cover and appears in smaller typeface in the title page). The barge, we are told in the text should have silk awnings, twelve maidens and one hundred torches, while in the illustration we find seven maidens in a swan-driven shell covered by a spider's web. The figure of Arthur, even in his later adventures, seems more like a ten-year-old boy than the mature Arthur. The illustrations are, however, excellent – colourful, bright

and imaginative, while the literary style is simple and direct, although at times verging on the simplistic: Arthur, for example, is suffering in a dungeon, when a mysterious damsel enters and asks: "How are you?". "In an unpleasant adventure" is his rather obvious reply.

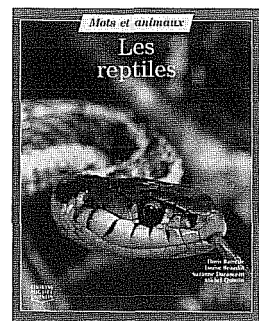
Graham Caie has taught *Chaucer and Medieval Studies* at the University of Copenhagen. Last year he received the Teacher of the Year Award in Denmark.

MINI-COMPTES RENDUS

Le Club des Moucs-Moucs. Mimi Legault. Illus. Marie Lafrance. Montréal, Tisseyre, 1988. 116 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89051-540-8.

Au début, je me suis trouvé agacé par cette histoire un peu simpliste d'un club de garçons, sortes de Kinsmen modèles réduits, et de deux filles, sortes de Kinettes en herbe, qui aimeraient bien en faire partie. Mais l'agacement initial s'est effacé, car l'apparente clarté des rôles se couvre d'une ambiguïté tout à fait souhaitable. D'abord, les garçons ne sont pas unanimes, ni dans leur rejet des filles, ni dans leur désir de maintenir les règlements et les rituels qui constituent leur groupe. Et les deux filles finissent par se nuire l'une l'autre, par jalousie. Ce qui fascine chez Mimi Legault, c'est que la différence bien réelle entre individus disparaît sous le masque social et le costume. Sobriquets et déguisement cachent le sexe et assurent la nouvelle paix sociale. Mais les différences couvent et se révèlent parfois. Ce sont les moments de révélations qui constituent les temps forts du roman. Somme tout, une amiguïté plus inquiétante qu'à prime abord.

Les animaux de la ferme. Louise Beaudin et Michel Quintin. Illus. Doris Barrette. Photo. Michel Quintin. Waterloo, Québec, Michel Quintin, 1988. 23pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-920438-20-4; **Les reptiles.** Louise Beaudin et Michel Quintin. Illus. Doris Barrette et Suzanne Duranceau. Photo. Michel Quintin. Waterloo, Québec, Michel Quintin, 1989. 23pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-920438-26-3.



Voilà deux éléments d'une série qu'on connaît bien maintenant au Québec. Louise Beaudin, Michel Quintin et Doris Barrette réussissent à maintenir l'équilibre entre la comptine, le texte de vulgarisation scientifique, l'illustration et la photographie. Cet alliage de quatre média en une vingtaine de pages est déjà un exploit notable. Ces deux albums sont de très belles qualité dans leur ensemble, même s'ils comptent certaines faiblesses. Dans **Les animaux de la**