

copy also fell out when I opened the book.

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STORYING AND LEARNING

Stories in the Classroom. Bob Barton and David Booth. Pembroke Publishers, 1990. 200 pp., \$14.95 paper. ISBN 0-921-217-439.

To story or not to: that is the question answered by Barton and Booth in *Stories in the classroom*. In their reply they persist in using the noun "story" as a verb and urge teachers to transform their classrooms into "storying tribes" where children and teachers will bond together without "elitism" into "storying communities." In spite of the use of contemporary educational jargon and slogans, this is a serious book where the power of story in children's lives is discussed in detail.

To Barton and Booth, narratives are, for the young, "a kind of shorthand for dealing with complex situations such as wickedness or deceit" (42) and afford them the opportunity to mentally venture afar and grapple with awesome challenges. Through stories children also learn literary forms and language by coming "to know the anatomy of story, its forms, genres, motifs, patterns, universals, words, and images" (16).

Like Egan in *Teaching as storytelling* (1987), Barton and Booth propose that narratives become the heart of the school curriculum, arguing that the structure of stories lies at the root of the mind and that story's possibilities for learning activities are endless: "They can be burrowed into, built onto, they can provide the stimuli for talk, extend reading and a host of interpretive activities" (23).

The authors give advice on choosing stories and provide examples from folktales, picture books, story poems and novels; they also advise how to help children respond to stories through "talk, drama, painting, dance, writing, modeling, spontaneous laughter, letters to authors" and so on (93). But they wisely add a note of caution: a simple response is often the most effective one in helping children to explore stories for their own sake – children like to talk about stories and benefit from it.

The authors write with a genuine enthusiasm for their subject; their knowledge and love of the world of children's literature is inspirational and their experience of working with teachers and children for over thirty years comes through. In addition, their approach to story is innovative, acknowledging as it does that: "stories come in all shapes and sizes – novels, tales, legends, pic-

ture books, poems, scripts, advertisements" (47), plus the children's own life stories and the new tales that are created when they respond to existing ones.

While Barton and Booth have a valuable message for teachers, the full impact of *Stories in the classroom* is often lost because the book needs a tighter organization. For the first half of the book one is never sure whether its main purpose is to be about the powers of story or a practical classroom guide. Some statements are positively misleading; for example, the final chapter begins: "We described in the last chapter our reasons for helping children respond to the stories they have listened to or read" (112). The previous chapter deals with a rationale for response to story but by far the greatest amount of space is devoted to *how* to respond to stories rather than *why* to. Strange, for a book on storytelling, its own story is sometimes not very clear.

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SUSPENSEFUL CHRONICLES OF THE DAVARD FAMILY

Scorpion's treasure. Daniel Sernine. Trans. Frances Morgan. Black Moss Press, 1990. 143 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-211-X; **The sword of Arhapa.** Daniel Sernine. Trans. Frances Morgan. Black Moss Press, 1990. 181 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-212-8.

Quebec has many excellent fiction writers for children, but most of them are still unknown in English Canada. Judging from their recent publication of eight titles in translation, Black Moss Press will soon change the situation. Some of the titles are by such well-known French Canadian writers as Daniel Sernine, Denis Côté, Joanne Masse and Charles Montpetit.

Two of the titles, *Scorpion's treasure* and *The sword of Arhapa*, are by award-winning author Daniel Sernine. They are the first two volumes in his fascinating chronicle of the Davard Family. The events take place in one of the first settlements in New France in a small town called Neubourg near Quebec.

Scorpion's treasure, tells the adventures of Luc and Benoit who witness the arrival of a mysterious ship that anchors in the middle of Anse-au-Breton. The two come upon sailors unloading heavy bags and storing them in the cave that the boys have recently discovered. Suspicious, they enter the cave secretly, uncover bags of gold, and plan to later take some of the booty. The next day, when the Baron's son, Captain Davard, a privateer for the King of France, arrives in his ship, the "Scorpion", Luc and Benoit realize that he is the owner of the mysterious ship. His treasure well-guarded, Captain Davard goes in search of his father, whom the settlers suspect is involved in sorcery, and soon learns that the Baron is dead.