

by the acquisition of powers of self-definition. The quest for home is the quest for centre.

April Moth's name and appearance (she has antennae on her hat and a moth design on her skirt) provide a clue to the nature of her dilemma. Like the moth, she is suspended in that space between dark and light; she finds herself symbolically caught by society's conception of her as homeless. She and her dog, Mr. Kneebone, seek not only to find home but to define "home." Like the trials of fairy tale lore, the people and places April Moth encounter offer her the opportunity for self-realization. In one place, an apartment April and Mr. Kneebone investigate, cats of every description "seep out of every doorway" and shower down upon them; the physical repulsiveness of the cats makes them further embodiments of the dangers of the urban world. Having escaped that "sickly cat stew," they encounter Sweet Daddy Three Times, whose verbal idiosyncrasies and contorted gestures accentuate the decay of the urban world around him.

April Moth's choice of a final home in the city park is an act of deconstruction and creation. She has defied the societally based notion of "home" by transforming it into her own conception of the natural world as home. Although Wallace's solution to April Moth's dilemma is perhaps too idealistic for the realities which confront our own society, he has created a heroine of remarkable strength and a picture book that challenges the traditional boundaries of its genre.

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BERTON'S CANADIAN HISTORY

Canada under siege. Pierre Berton. McClelland & Stewart, 1991. 86 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1431-7. **Revenge of the tribes.** Pierre Berton. McClelland & Stewart, 1991. 89 pp., \$5.99 paper. ISBN 0-7710-1429-5.

Two of a four part set, these titles feature the events and people involved in military confrontations along the Great Lakes border during the War of 1812. *Canada under siege* covers the attacks on York and Fort George, the battles of Stoney Creek and Beaver Dams, and the legendary walk of Laura Secord. *Revenge of the tribes* highlights the events and attitudes that prompted the Indians to throw their support and force behind the Canadian and British cause. Other titles not reviewed cover battles at Detroit and Queenston Heights.

Berton covers this historical material in a manner both vivid and engaging. As adults have been drawn to his popularized histories, so too should a younger readership. The third-person narrative form, interspersed with direct quota-

tions, draws the reader into history. One cannot help but sympathise with the soldiers when the physical conditions they had to endure are described in the following manner: "Harnessed five to a sleigh, [the soldiers] hauled their equipment through snow and water for eleven days...Provisions and men were soon soaked through. The days were bad but the nights were a horror" (*Revenge* 38). The military leaders and individual soldiers are given human faces in some broad portrayals that are not always flattering or uncritical. Human error, failings or procrastination determine the course of the war as much as bravery, decisiveness, and heroic acts. Pierre Berton, the storyteller, excels in weaving the facts, events and people of the period into compelling stories.

As well, there is no lack of factual detail, and peppered throughout the text are maps and illustrations highlighting military features such as attack routes, weaponry, and uniforms. A good index makes the information accessible if the books are being used for historical study. On the same note, an eleven-page overview of the war appears at the beginning of each title in the series and gives a broad perspective connecting the individual events to the general development of Canadian history. While useful, the repetition of this relatively lengthy preface in each slender volume is perhaps unnecessary.

In his historical analysis, Berton presents the War of 1812 as a civil war, a "war fought by men and women on both sides of a border that all had ignored until hostilities broke out..." (*Overview* 10). With many settlers being former Americans or related to such, this fact is relevant in determining the sentiment of civilians or even the militia, but one wonders how strongly it applied to the British and American military leaders and the regular army. This approach also has little relevance to the Indians who participated and to whom Berton assigns an integral role. Their support of the British and Canadian cause resulted from the American policy to undertake the total destruction of the Indians as signalled by the Battle of Tippecanoe. In turn, such Indian leaders as Tecumseh, were "determined to lead the forces of his confederacy across the border to fight beside the British against the common enemy" (*Revenge* 29).

A second theme that Berton attempts to develop is one of the war as a foundation of Canadian nationalism. Having repelled the giant from the south in defense of their settlements, Canadians "developed both a sense of pride and sense of community" (*Overview* 19) that in future would forge a nation. This view loses a little of the glory when at times he shows that victory often came through luck, bad weather or some other prosaic event. As well, Berton is a little inconsistent when he refers to the "real victors, who, being Indians, were really losers" (*Revenge* 84). The intent to provide some continuity is admirable, but at times the result is strained.

Overall, there is little doubt that this series will be successful. It provides the excitement of a good adventure story with a wealth of historical data. These titles also fill a gap that should provide some curriculum support. One should

note that the "Battles of the War of 1812" is actually a subset of another series entitled *Adventures in Canadian History* that will cover topics from the war to the opening of the Canadian West and is targeted for children twelve and up.

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CANADIAN INVENTORS: BOMBARDIER AND BEYOND

Inventors: Profiles in Canadian genius. Thomas Carpenter, Camden House, 1990. 160 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-920656-93-5.

Thomas Carpenter's *Inventors: Profiles in Canadian genius* is an excellent little study. In eight chapters the author discusses nine Canadian inventors and their remarkable contributions. We receive fascinating insights into the creative lives of Thomas Willson (who gave us acetylene, which revolutionized a whole series of industrial processes), Abraham Gesner (whose work permanently altered the world's petrochemical industry), Reginald Fessenden (whose wireless radio changed the course of history) and Mabel Bell (the wife of Alexander Graham Bell and the inspiration behind the Aerial Experiment Association that gave Canada its first manned flight).

One of the most interesting chapters explains how Georges-Edouard Desbarats and his partner William Leggo invented the process that enabled the publication of photographs in newspapers and worked out production methods that made the use of the process widely usable. The result, of course, was the transformation of the print medium. Another Canadian invention that altered the print medium was made by William Stevenson, an industrialist and one of the most important British espionage figures during World War II, as well as an inventor; he gave the world the wirephoto. The result was another communications revolution, one that began "a new era in illustrated journalism," as Britain's *Daily News* put it in 1922.

Carpenter also discusses Sir Sandford Fleming, a longtime chancellor of Queen's University and an important railway engineer, who made a major contribution to the development of "standard time." Without standard time, modern communications and transport could not function, and Carpenter is correct when he notes that Fleming's clever system "transformed the modern world" (45).

Of the nine inventors discussed by Carpenter, J. Armand Bombardier's name is probably the best known. He invented the tracked vehicle, now universally called the "Ski-Doo," that enabled people in snowy areas to move freely during long northern winters. The Ski-Doo had a profound effect on the lives