



illustrations and attention to careful detail, it is successful for several reasons. First, children will become actively involved in the reading of the text as they quickly identify the pattern of the story and associate the humorous illustrations with the text. Second, the rhythm and rhyming of the text will draw young children into the story and encourage many to memorize the simple verses. Finally, children will be entertained by the silly antics of the cartoon characters as they “hang round in trees” or “swing in the vines.”

The characters, with their bright numbered shirts, are easy to distinguish against the soft, water-coloured background. Although the simple rhyme of the verses is suitable for primary children, one expects more imaginative lines than “along long tree lined drives” from bp Nichol.

The story is simple and lucid until the final perplexing verse: “Zero times I saw/O zeroes/because you always see/O zeroes/which means I never saw/O zeroes/was what I saw.” This ending will confuse children who anticipate “10 times I saw ...” and who are just tackling the concept of whole numbers. This verse will require explanation on the part of the adult.

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CHILDREN HAVE PROBLEMS TOO

And you can be the cat. Hazel Hutchins. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick Press, 1992. 24 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 1-55037-219-X; **Maggee and the lake minder.** Richard Thompson. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Annick Press, 1991. 32 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 1-55037-154-1; **A difficult day.** Eugenie Fernandes. Kids Can Press Ltd., 1987. 32 pp., \$10.95. ISBN 0-921103-17-4.

And you can be the cat is a truthful book that concerns a small boy named Norman, his big sister, and the boy who comes over to play. As revealed in the title of the book, the older children have an efficient method of incorporating Norman into their make-believe words. When Norman realizes that his assignment will never change, he pretends to be an unruly cat, after which the older children ostracize him. Norman’s creative reaction to the disaster leads to the resolution. The surprise ending shows that an unhappy actor may not need a big promotion; he may just need recognition of his talent. The warmly coloured illustrations show how the children

A Difficult Day



Eugenie Fernandes

use the same things over and over to create different worlds.

A difficult day and *Maggee and the lake minder* are both magnificently illustrated. The drawings have great depth and realism and the colours are subtle, layered and shadowed. *A difficult day* would have been a lot less difficult for Melinda if her mother had woken her up in time to get to school and later asked about her day at school. Melinda gets punched at school, and accidentally falls into a puddle. She doesn't tell her mother, who orders her to take a bath, where Melinda

finds relaxation. Most mothers routinely help their child get through the day and would be quite happy to let their school-age child play in the tub. Melinda's mother gets angry because Melinda doesn't get out of the tub when asked to do so. When the mother comments that Melinda is having a difficult day and brings cookies to Melinda's room, the gesture seems motivated more by the mother's guilt than by a sympathetic understanding of Melinda's bad day. When Melinda doesn't seem to be in her room, and the mother searches everywhere, even the laundry basket, without calling Melinda's name, it gets too difficult to believe that Melinda's mother is real.

Maggee and the lake minder suffers because the reader is not informed right away that the frog has the important job of minding the lake and checking the drain. By not alerting readers to the possibility of flooding, the author misses an opportunity to create suspense during the talent show. When the drain does get clogged, it is Maggee and The Bird who deal with the problem while the Lake Minder is off picking flowers. If it had been the frog who coped with the disaster, we could believe in his promise to remember to do his work on Maggee's subsequent visits. Also, Maggee's goal, which is to search for her shoe, is suggested in the illustrations but never mentioned in the text.

MAGGEE and the LAKE MINDER



THOMPSON • FERNANDES

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