

Apart from the fact that these qualities have already been demonstrated through Maha's actions and don't need to be restated for the benefit the reader, the image of a teenage boy talking out loud to himself in these terms lacks authenticity.

There is also the problem of point of view. The book begins in the first person from the perspective of a nameless girl who narrates events as they happen after Karim arrives in the Quebec high school. However, this narrator remains an enigmatic, undeveloped character who remains outside the action and has no relationship with Karim other than her observation of him, thus confusing and disappointing the reader's expectations. The novel occasionally switches to Karim's first-person viewpoint via his journal entries and flashes back to a third-person account of his journey to Chifla in Lebanon, all of which makes for a rather choppy narrative. Nevertheless, the story is compelling, and the ideas and issues are relevant, timely, and clearly articulated, making this book an excellent vehicle for discussion in a classroom setting.

In *Flying Geese*, Barbara Haworth-Attard does a marvelous job of depicting the complexities of family dynamics — from the conflicted father, crushed between pride and abject poverty, to the exhausted mother whose worry translates into a sharp tongue, to the icy friction that can exist between relatives. Uprooted from her beloved prairie farm and transplanted in suburban London, Ontario, Margaret Brown clings desperately to the conviction that if only she can finish piecing together a quilt with its pattern of flying geese returning home in the spring then she, too, will somehow be able to return home to Saskatchewan.

The characters and the dialogue in this novel carry a poignancy and authenticity that immediately draw the reader in and bridge generation gaps. The emotion that swirls around the dinner table when eldest brother Edward announces he has enlisted is punctuated by fussy toddlers and squabbling siblings. This scene sets the standard for the rest of the book as Haworth-Attard deftly creates a recognizable and believable reality that anyone who has ever sat at a large family table can immediately relate to. References to Nellie McClung and Edith Cavell breathe life and significance into this important segment of Canadian history. Margaret's loneliness is palpable, and the spirit of perseverance that wings its way through this story does not dull the gritty, jagged blade of reality that cuts through sentimentality and tidy endings.

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They Shoot, They Score!

Slam Dunk. Sports Stories 23. Steven Barwin and Gabriel David Tick. James Lorimer, 1998. 88 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-598-X paper, 1-55028-599-8 cloth. *Cutting It Close. Sports Stories* 24. Marion Crook. James Lorimer, 1998. 93 pp. \$8.95 paper.

ISBN 1-55028-616-1 paper, 1-55028-617-X cloth. *Hockey Heat Wave. Sports Stories* 27. C.A. Forsyth. James Lorimer, 1998. 79 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-618-8 paper, 1-55028-619-6 cloth. *The Winning Edge. Sports Stories* 28. Michele Martin Bossley. James Lorimer, 1998. 87 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-528-636-6 paper, 1-55028-637-4 cloth. *Fast Finish. Sports Stories* 30. William Swan. James Lorimer, 1998. 117 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-640-4 paper, 1-55028-641-2 cloth. *Shoot to Score. Sports Stories* 31. Sandra Richmond. James Lorimer, 1998. 92 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-642-0 paper, 1-55028-643-9 cloth. *Courage on the Line. Sports Stories* 33. Cynthia Bates. James Lorimer, 1999. 117 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-648-X paper, 1-55028-649-8 cloth. *Free Throw. Sports Stories* 34. Jacqueline Guest. James Lorimer, 1999. 128 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-664-1 paper, 1-55028-665-X cloth. *Hit and Run. Sports Stories* 35. Dawn Hunter and Karen Hunter. James Lorimer, 1999. 92 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-672-2 paper, 1-55028-673-0 cloth. *Triple Threat. Sports Stories* 38. Jacqueline Guest. James Lorimer, 1999. 123 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-628-X paper, 1-55028-681-1 cloth. *Power Hitter. Sports Stories* 41. C.A. Forsyth. James Lorimer, 1999. 86 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-732-X paper, 1-55028-733-8 cloth. *Shooting Star. Sports Stories* 46. Cynthia Bates. James Lorimer, 2001. 102 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-726-5 paper, 1-55028-727-3 cloth. *Pool Princess. Sports Stories* 47. Michele Martin Bossley. James Lorimer, 2001. 94 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-728-1 paper, 1-55028-729-X cloth. *Sayonara, Sharks. Sports Stories* 48. Judi Peers. James Lorimer, 2001. 84 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-730-3 paper, 1-55028-731-1 cloth.

Although first marketed specifically toward pre-adolescent boys, a group statistically known to prefer sports over reading, the books in the *Sports Stories* umbrella series have proven well-liked by boys and girls alike, including middle readers with no prior familiarity or interest in sports. Well-written and well-researched, the books manage to insert positive lessons about cooperation, teamwork, peer pressure, independence, sexism, and racism without being too preachy or didactic. Instead, these lessons are secondary to compelling stories about believable characters from a wide range of racial and economic backgrounds and who live in a variety of geographic locations across Canada — unlike many similar series where a racial or a working-class stereotype rounds out an otherwise all-white, all-middle class, and all-suburban cast.

The series' two major detractions have less to do with the books themselves but with their enduring appeal. The stories are peppered with technical details that young sports enthusiasts will enjoy, but some of these references are so time-specific that middle-grade readers may soon find the books outdated once today's star becomes yesterday's has-been. As well, given the staggering volume of American and British book series competing for middle-school readership, was it wise to release 48 titles in such a short time? Without the cachet of *The Hardy Boys* or *Harry Potter* or *Sweet Valley High* to ensure record sales, the Lorimer company may find that 48 similar titles may intimidate rather than attract: in this case, the more is not necessarily the merrier.

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