

affairs, they will have served a good purpose. They are less successful, however, in promoting the self-examination which the best and most educative literature compels in us.

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## MINI-REVIEWS

**Yukon Chinook.** Karen Walker. Yukon Fish and Game Association, 1991. 32 pp., \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-9695099-0-1.

Although published as a picture storybook, *Yukon Chinook* is an informational book for older readers containing a wealth of well-organized information lavishly illustrated in full-colour. Most of the illustrations show the distinctive physical characteristics of salmon at different stages of development.

The problems with this picture book include the absence of needed narrative content and the layout of the book. If Leo Lionni had not given the little black fish a name, if we could not identify him in the illustrations, and if his adventure were a subplot, would we so readily cheer Swimmy's survival and view him as a very memorable character (*Swimmy* 68)? The absence of story in *Yukon Chinook* makes it highly unlikely that young readers will view the generic salmon as a memorable character. The layout of the book is problematic because different perspectives of the environment are placed side-by-side, divided only by a slight change in the hue of some colours. Also, the lead-in lines in several illustrations direct the reader's eye into the seam of the book (12-13, 18-19).

In spite of the short-comings of this book as a picture storybook, I think middle-grade teachers will find *Yukon Chinook* a very helpful resource in science units of study that centre on ecology issues.

**Sawiti: A whale's story.** Alexandra Morton. Orca Book Publishers, 1991. 47 pp., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920501-56-7.

This book is the story of a baby orca's social development during her first year. The story is complemented by spectacular colour photos of the pod's social behaviour.

Soon after Sawiti, an orca or killer whale, is born, adult females nudge her

until she swims behind her mother's dorsal fin. There she learns to swim confidently before venturing forth in a series of mini-adventures. Guided and protected by adult members of the pod, Sawiti explores her environment, above and below the water line. Eventually, she learns to skyhop by diving straight down, streaking for the surface and bursting into the air with her pectoral fins straight out in front.

While reading this book I felt Alexandra Morton and I were sharing one of her family albums. This one was special because it helped me understand both her research interests in killer whales and her personal bonding with Sawiti's pod, which live near Morton's home on Gilford Island, British Columbia. This book is a literary and visual feast for readers of all ages.

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**Stampede.** Mary Blakeslee. Overlea House, 1989. 143 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-7172-2580-1.

This action-packed, fast-moving mystery story features the Lemon Street Gang who rival the Hardy Boys in their detecting skills. True to this genre, the boys see things adults don't and make quantum intuitive and deductive leaps to correct conclusions light years before the adults admit (reluctantly) to their veracity. Kyle, Matthew and Jason are at the Calgary Stampede when one of the out-riders in an important race has a nasty fall. Sabotage is a possibility and the boys immediately decide to investigate. Stock phrases like "Maybe there is more to this than meets the eye" are bandied about and the gang moves into high gear. The villains are easily identified by their use of threats ("Better watch yourself, kid....Know what I mean?"). The plot thickens; Kyle overhears a final evil plan and is discovered, whacked on the head, and abandoned several miles away before managing to free himself and make his way back to the Stampede just in time to flag down the race and save the day. To the bemusement of the slower-witted adults, the Lemon Street boys once more triumph as they have in their two previous adventures, *Carnival* and *Museum mayhem*.

Stereotyped characters, trite phrases and a general portrayal of adults as not overly bright place this book right in the middle of the series detective genre. Repeated references to Kyle's gargantuan appetite are annoying after a while rather than humorous. And Aunt Betty can't be that stupid, even if she is female.

**Fran Ashdown** is the head of the children's department at the Capilano Branch of the North Vancouver District Public Library.