

suffering. Mr. Chung Lee seems sincere in his actions, and the fact that the boys do not completely understand why he frees the lobster makes the story more believable. Unfortunately, the constant inclusion of the younger boy's malapropisms is irritating and superfluous to the story. Without them the book would have been more focused and less condescending.

The story is strengthened by full-page, softly-shaded watercolours. Illustrator Johnny Wales has used light and perspective to capture the mood of Charlottetown in the waning hours of a summer afternoon. There is, however, one illustration that does not correspond to the text. In the story Chung Lee has just come out of his house, but the picture shows him going in.

Silversides: the life of a sockeye follows the life of a Pacific salmon from the time it hatches until it returns to its birthplace to spawn and die. It was written in the 1920s by a British Columbia sportsman and writer. After sixty-five years out of print it has been reissued by Nightwood as part of its "Forest Friends" series. This book should have remained out of print. It is written as an animal biography in a style that is dated and, I feel, no longer acceptable in a book that purports to teach factual information. The fish are given human characteristics and emotions. For example, when Silversides learns to swim we are told "... he thought himself a very fine fish indeed." Later in the story instinct is equated with bravery: "a brave fish he is who travels hundreds of miles to answer the call of the sea." While some degree of anthropomorphism can work in realistic animal fiction, the human characteristics should come from the actions of the animals and must not be imposed upon them.

Aside from the style, this book is flawed by inaccurate information. It says that Silverside's eggshell was very tough but he found a weak spot and broke a hole through it. Salmon do not actually hatch in this way. Rather, their shell is absorbed as they grow from egg to alevin to fry. Silversides is also portrayed as the leader of a school of fifty, but schools of salmon do not have leaders.

Although Kim Lefave's wood cut illustrations have not captured the majestic qualities the author attributes to the salmon, the layout for the book is very clever. The salmon swim through rivers, which flow across the page. The rivers tumble from one page to the next as the salmon are swept over a log jam on their journey to the sea. The illustrations, however, cannot rescue the flawed and dated text.

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THE WORLD OF TREES

A tree in a forest. Jan Thornhill. Greedy de Pencier Books, 1991. Unpag., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920775-64-0.

A tree in a forest is an imaginatively-executed non-fiction work on the life cycle of a maple tree. Extending the style established in her concept picture-books (*Wildlife ABC* and *Wildlife 123*) to an advanced level for an older audience, this book combines Thornhill's signature elements: illustrations that are large, framed,

stylized yet realistic, and text that is descriptive, factual and Canadian in content.

The framed pictures draw the reader into the forest scene as if through a window onto another world. The frames themselves are decorated with the primitive pattern Thornhill employed in her earlier books and which work well with the stylized realism of the art. The intricate compositions bring the eye to the densely-detailed foreground creating a sense of intimacy. The pictures both illustrate the text and go beyond it, revealing relationships between forest creatures which Thornhill does not necessarily explicate in the text. Inset into the frame of the picture is a year date which anchors the tree along a time-line with which the child may identify, and the seasons or the age of the tree is named at the bottom of the page. During the lifetime of the tree, the reader (and the forest) witnesses the gradual escalation of human life in the forest. One drawback of the work is that the humans are idealized; this detracts from the realism and general authenticity of the work.

The text is itself as cyclical as the maple tree. It opens and closes with a maple seed beginning to sustain itself from a dead, fallen tree. This allegory of life coming out of death is reassuringly spontaneous. The continual present tense employed over the two-hundred-year span of the text emphasizes the idea of the earth as living history. Thornhill evocatively identifies the textures, the sounds, and the sensations of the forest and its creatures—her forest lives. The text blends poetic language and a loose narrative following seasonal change with ecology. Botanical terms are clearly defined without dryness and incorporated without intrusion into the text. A child will leave the book feeling self-taught rather than “taught at.”

A tree in a forest is an OWL Young Naturalist Foundation book and is an excellent teaching tool as an introduction to the life cycle of a tree suitable for the eight- to ten-year-old age group.

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