Milne, A.A. Winnie the Pooh. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1926.
Nodelman, Perry. “A Monochromatic Mosaic: Class, Race, and Culture in Double-Focalized Canadian Novels for Young People.” Canadian Children's Literature / Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse (forthcoming).

A Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg, Perry Nodelman is the author of Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Books (U of Georgia P, 1988) and of many articles about various aspects of children's literature.

The Making of the Cultural Mosaic / Jonathan F. Vance


Public opinion surveys consistently reveal that one of the defining features of Canadian identity is the cultural mosaic. This characterization, which sees a nation of immigrants who retain significant elements of their own cultural heritage in becoming Canadians, has had a long shelf life, underpinning everything from the Trudeau policy of official multiculturalism to government funding for heritage language instruction. It also underpins a sizeable body of historical fiction, imparting a thematic unity to a body of work that spans a remarkably broad range of subject matter.

Indeed, two of these books emerge from series that are explicitly intended to explore the experience of cultural diversity: Coteau's In the Same Boat, the seventh volume of which is Larry Warwaruk's Andrei and the Snow Walker, and Fitzhenry & Whiteside's New Beginnings, a new series inaugurated by Mary Alice Downie's Seared Sarah. Both books deal with the same experience, albeit at different points in
Canadian Children’s Literature / Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse

Because they live on the frontier, many of these remote communities produce a unique type of literature that is often characterized by a strong emphasis on adventure and survival. This is especially true of the Inuit, who have a rich oral tradition that has been passed down through generations. The Inuit literature is often characterized by a strong emphasis on the natural world and the importance of living in harmony with it.

Another group of Canadian children’s literature that is worth mentioning is the work of Aboriginal writers. This literature is often characterized by a strong sense of identity and a desire to preserve the cultures of their people. The work of Aboriginal writers is often deeply rooted in the traditions and values of their communities, and it is often used as a way to pass down these traditions to the next generation.

In conclusion, Canadian children’s literature is a rich and diverse field that offers something for everyone. Whether you are interested in adventure, survival, or the unique challenges of living in a remote community, there is something in Canadian children’s literature that will appeal to you.
when the characters are thrust into the educational institutions of the host society. In *Criss Cross, Double Cross*, Sophie’s desire to be like everyone else crashes up against her parents’ wish that she transfer from an English to a French school; her elders value the survival of their culture (the scene in which Monsieur le Curé comes to “recruit” Sophie for the École Notre Dame de Fatima is a marvelous vignette that gets to the heart of the cultural complexities of Canada in 1949), but she is much happier to be assimilated with the rest of the kids in her neighbourhood and fears being taunted as a “Frenchie pea soup” (49). For the protagonist in Watts’s semi-autobiographical *Finding Sophie*, the tension between old and new leads to unexpected consequences. Watts’s Sophie tries so hard to become a typical English schoolgirl that, over time, she loses her own ethnicity; when faced with a difficult choice at the novel’s end, Sophie Mandel realizes that she simply can’t go back to being the German girl she once was. Further complicating matters is Sophie’s age, and Watts does a wonderful job of describing her occasional slides into teenage irrationality as raging hormones take over. Margit, in Kathy Kacer’s *Home Free*, faces the same dilemma. During the first few days in her new Kensington Market neighbourhood in Toronto, she is determined to keep her Czech name, but soon changes her mind and attempts to erase every vestige of her past; she is horrified when the teacher asks her to tell the class about her experiences in Czechoslovakia and shocked when everyone applauds enthusiastically.

Everyone, that is, except Ellen, the class anti-Semite who represents a second theme in this literature: the intolerance faced by newcomers. This relationship provides the bulk of the conflict in these novels, for many of the protagonists encounter the same prejudice, albeit embodied in different people. For Rachel, it is the discharged soldiers who despise the black Loyalists as much for their colour as for their willingness to work for lower wages. For Sophie Mandel, it is the boorish Stanley, who refers to her as “the enemy” (57) and makes snide comments about fraternization that only deepen her determination to fit into her new homeland. But most often it is another girl who emerges as the tormentor, like Elizabeth, whose carefully contrived airs and studied ignorance of French-Canadian culture infuriate Sophie LaGrange and cause her to waver between a burning desire to fit in and a wish that she could simply disappear. For all of the dramatic potential inherent in this kind of conflict, however, those scenes are surprisingly flat. This is perhaps the most disappointing element of these books, especially given that bullying is one of the biggest challenges faced by the children who will be reading them. In fact, none of the writers is able to present the bully as anything more than a one-dimensional stereotype. Even Joan Clark, whose novel is full of finely-rendered characters like the tragic shrew Mrs. Hatch and the hard-edged but ultimately noble Wanda, does nothing more with the ghastly Eunice than present her in terms of conventional nastiness.

Even if the portrayal of the bullies is lacking in depth, the best of these novels do admit that, because of the depth of prejudice, the coming together of different cultures did not always have a happy ending. Anne Laurel Carter gives Elizabeth’s story a Little House on the Prairie-ish ending that doesn’t quite ring true, but Martha Attema takes the bull by the horns in *When the War is Over*. Janke Visser, a sixteen-year-old courier for the Dutch resistance during the Second World War, falls in love with a sensitive and kind German soldier only to learn to her peril that not all cultures can mix at all times. The plot twists are entirely predictable, but Attema does not shy away from a dénouement that, for reasons of historical accuracy, could
not have been any different. This frank conclusion more than makes up for the stilted dialogue and unengaging characters of what could have been a rather unsatisfying book. Kathy Stinson’s *Marie-Claire, Book Two: A Season of Sorrows* also refuses to take the easy route in exploring the divide that can result when cultures come together. In one of the best books in the *Our Canadian Girl* series, Stinson tackles a little-known tragedy, the Montreal smallpox epidemic of 1885, and its impact on Marie-Claire’s family. History tells us that the odds of surviving the epidemic depended less on class than on ethnicity and religion, and Stinson is particularly good at conveying the anguish of Marie-Claire’s mother as she wonders whether her religious faith has been partly responsible for the decimation of her family. For the Laroches, as it was for so many families in French Montreal, there was no easy answer to that question.

Prejudice and intolerance certainly characterized the immigrant experience, but so too did the cooperative spirit, a third theme that underlies many of these novels. It is clear that Andrei’s family would not have prospered without the help of the local Métis and the other immigrants who came before them, and Scared Sarah’s family comes to rely on the Ojibway of their district for survival tricks. In Priscilla Galloway’s *Lisa, Book One: Overland to Cariboo*, based on the true story of a family that took part on a trek from Manitoba to find gold in British Columbia, cooperation between the ethnically diverse people on the trek is essential to their success, just as it is for the Métis people who band together for the annual food-gathering expedition in Cora Taylor’s *Angelique, Book One: Buffalo Hunt*. But in none of these books is the spirit of cooperation between cultures depicted so subtly as in Bernice Gold’s *Strange School, Secret Wish*, a charming story of a thirteen-year-old girl who lives in a railway school that travels back and forth across northern Ontario to educate the children of isolated communities. The main story concerns Jenny Merrill’s campaign to acquire a violin from the Eaton’s catalogue (a plot that might read like an extended advertisement if the store were still in existence), but the real interest is in the supporting cast. The diverse mix of characters who pass through the railway carriage-cum-school could have been found in any resource town in the 1920s, when the novel is set, but Gold never resorts to the kind of stereotyping to be found in earlier fictional accounts of northern Ontario, like Britton Cooke’s 1923 play *The Translation of John Snath*. Instead, they are rendered with great dignity and restraint, and the way they come together to help Jenny realize her dream parallels the spirit of cooperation that characterized the mosaic at the best of times.

The migrant experience was all about realizing dreams of a better life, and that quest for betterment represents a fourth theme in this literature. Whether it be Hing, the Chinese cook in Julie Lawson’s *Emily, Book Two: Disaster at the Bridge* who has come to Canada to build a more prosperous future for his family, or Will, the young transient who teaches Ellen a lesson about contentment in *Ellen, Book One: Hobo Jungle*, many of these characters seek a more stable life, in economic, social, or personal terms. This search is at the heart of *Search of the Moon King’s Daughter*, Linda Holeman’s powerful account of a teenager’s struggle to survive a string of tragedies in industrial England. It is a dark and sometimes depressing novel with a plot and a cast of characters that is positively Dickensian. The death of Emmaline Roke’s beloved father destroys their stable world and sends the family on a downward spiral through alcoholism, domestic abuse, poverty, drug addiction, and white slavery. In her odyssey to reunite the family, Emmaline comes into contact with a haughty and manipulative aunt (whose husband’s name inexplicably changes from Nathan
Although it had been only a few hours since I got up that morning, I wasn’t looking forward to the school bus. The thought of being cooped up in a stuffy, crowded bus made me feel slightly apprehensive, but I knew I had to get there to catch my flight. I walked into the school, feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness.

I sat down in my seat, my mind wandering as the teacher began to talk. She spoke about the importance of hard work and dedication, themes that always seemed to resonate with me.

As the day progressed, I found myself lost in thought. I wondered what the future held for me. Would I be successful in my chosen career? Would I be happy? These were the questions that plagued my mind.

In the afternoon, we had a class presentation. I was nervous about it, but I managed to pull it off. As I walked back to my seat, I couldn’t help but feel a sense of accomplishment.

After school, I took the bus home. I had a lot to think about as I made my way through the traffic. I wondered what my life would be like in the future, and I couldn’t help but feel a sense of excitement mixed with apprehension.

When I finally arrived home, I settled in for the night. I listened to some music and tried to relax. As I drifted off to sleep, I couldn’t help but think about the future and what it held for me.
the explosion, she can rebuild her world. With this, she comes to the same realization that struck Rachel, Margit, Sophie Mandel, and Emmaline Roke: that it is possible to start over. The Irish Chain has another meaning that makes it a fitting symbol for this genre as a whole. For Rose, it represents how a range of personal experiences come together into a family's history. The quilt is, in itself, a kind of mosaic, and the cultural mosaic that these books describe is, like the quilt, more than the sum of its parts.

Jonathan F. Vance holds the Canada Research Chair in Conflict and Culture in the History department at the University of Western Ontario. His most recent book is High Flight: Aviation and the Canadian Imagination (Penguin, 2002).

Giggling Helplessly in the Middle Years / Margaret Steffler


