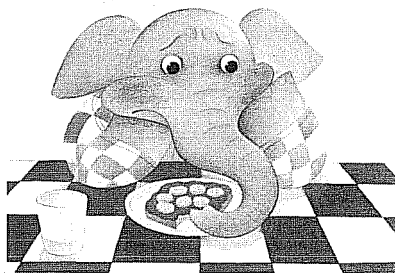
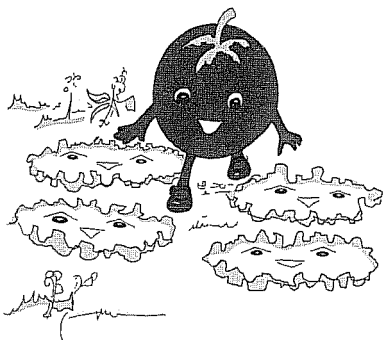


Tomate se soit amusée ou se soit formée. On se demande si ce voyage d'exploration, qui risque d'apprendre aux enfants à adopter de mauvais critères pour juger leur monde, mérite de former notre jeunesse. Heureusement, il est douteux que les jeunes ait envie de repartir avec Madame Tomate.



Illustrations de Madame Tomate dans sa planète Jardin et Le mensonge

Pauline Pocknell enseigne au Collège Mohawk de Hamilton, où elle coordonne les cours de français langue seconde. Elle a enseigné de la maternelle à l'université.

ANIMAL ADVENTURE STORIES FOR THE UNDER TWELVE SET

The adventures of Mickey, Taggy Puppo and Cica, and how they discover Switzerland; The adventures of Mickey, Taggy, Puppo and Cica, and how they discover the Netherlands, Kati Rékai. Illus. Elise Kain. Canadian Stage and Arts Publications Ltd., 1982, 1981. 113 pp., 121 pp. \$4.50 each, paper. ISBN 0-919952-15-1; 0-919951-05-4; ***The travels of Ms. Beaver, Ms. Beaver goes West, Ms. Beaver travels East***, Rosemary Allison, Illus. Ann Powell. The Women's Press, 1973, 1983, 1978. 32 pp. \$4.95 each paper. ISBN 0-88961-006-1; 0-88961-076-2; 0-88961-056-8; ***Houses for mouses, or hicc for mice***, Muriel E. Newton-White. Illus. author. Highway Book Shop, 1981. 25 pp. \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-88954-191-4; ***The school mouse and the hamster***, Dorothy Joan Harris. Illus. Judy Clifford. Frederick Warne & Co., Inc., 1979. 32 pp. \$8.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7232-6172-5; ***Herman the house mouse***, Barbara McLoughlin. Illus. Edna & Solveig Borgford. Queenston House Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978. 32 pp. ISBN 0-919866-47-6; ***Rosalyn rabbit***, Elizabeth Crocker. Illus. William C. Tobin. Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 1982. 48 pp. paper. \$4.95. ISBN 0-929852-17-3; ***Aka'k: a story for children***, Marjorie Kendall. Illus. author. Borealis Press, 1978. 20pp. \$1.95 paper. ISBN 0-919594-9; ***Tom mouse***, Glen Cléver. Illus. Anne Yarymowich. Borealis Press, 1980. 34 pp. \$4.95. ISBN

For younger children, between the ages of five to eleven, these books should provide a basis for emotional identification and an outlet in fantasy for restless urges. All these selections present animal adventures or travels. Most of them are suitable for children in the early elementary grades who are good readers; others could be appreciated by youngsters if read to them. Since there are several "series books" in the group, I will deal with these first.

The *Mickey, Taggy, Puppo and Cica* adventure and travel series, by Katie Re kai, are fairly lengthy stories which require sustained attention and extensive vocabulary familiarity; for this reason, they are probably more appropriate reading material for ages nine to eleven. Yet, by this age, the adventures of small animal characters (three dogs and a cat) might seem too immature a format. Some advantages to be gained from this series are informative value about the lands they visit, quick-paced narrative with suspense, (in the Swiss tale, they are in search of a run-away friend, and in the Dutch one, Cica is lost on a freighter), historical and contemporary anecdotes, and cultural familiarization. The questionable aspects, however, are the inclusion of advertising of brand names, stores, and individuals. While it may be argued that this provides realism, it is still doubtful whether or not the Nestle Co. and various Swiss Chocolate makers need be mentioned in the context of a claim that the cocoa and chocolate are good for the "animals" (children): full of vitamins and non-fattening (p. 63 in the Swiss book); besides being suspect as a nutritional source of vitamins, chocolates may not be appreciated by health-food-oriented mothers who want to wean their children from sugar and caffeine. As well, the frequent mention of restaurants, menus, and gourmet cuisine might be of more interest to adults than to children. There is also a rather simplistic view of the role of banks in Switzerland, which does not at all reflect the real nature of the Swiss international financial structure and its role in the world. Nor is it necessarily interesting to children to give the history of the Swiss music conservatory, its conductor-instructor, and other such details.

The same criticism would apply to the Netherlands adventure story, although this is shorter, contains more colorful illustrations, and less advertising. One might also see a sexist stereotype in the detail that Cica, the cat, who always carries a bikini along, is somewhat flighty. It seems to me that these two books pertain to an upper-middle-class life-style and not to less affluent children's range of experience.

The *Ms. Beaver* series, on the contrary, would appear to favor a feminist and socialist value-system. Ms. Beaver is an independent female who goes on various trips across the country, in the process getting into escapades, adventures, and political issues. The format is very simple; the language is easy to read (for six and seven year-olds); the drawings in pen sketches (blue, black, or green) match the color of the print and the shiny cover. The underlying

message is activist, and portrays big business companies, municipal government, and land speculators-developers as the antagonists. For example, in *Ms. Beaver goes east*, the heroine travels to Nova Scotia with a young woman, June; upon arriving at her home town they find the fish cannery in flames. After its destruction, Ms. Beaver begins to re-build something of a primitive structure, which, in turn, gives incentive to the local people to do likewise. A big-city developer appears, wanting to erect a motel, which the people oppose; instead, they determine to build a co-op with Ms. Beaver's help.

In *Ms. Beaver travels west*, the plot revolves around a conflict with a logging company, which has denuded the land of trees, nearly forcing Ms. Beaver's cousin, Penny, to move. The two enlist the help of a local elder, Mash Mouth Jo, who only cuts what she needs from her forested acreage. The Beavers stage a protest and build a dam, and in desperation, the company owner agrees to provide seedlings for reforestation. Clearly, local initiative and protest, conservation and ecology-consciousness are presented in a positive light. Similarly, in *Ms. Beaver's travels*, the municipal issue concerns Ms. Beaver's building a dam which the children enjoy for recreational sport, but which the police, mayor and others oppose. The mayor, being a political opportunist, decides to permit the dam to stay in order to gain votes at the next election. This series reminds me of a juvenile primer in political consciousness from a left-wing perspective.

Of the books featuring mice as protagonists, *Houses for mouses, or hicc for mice* is the most colorful and humorous; four mice want to imitate humans and so steal bits of material or clothing from a house in which grandparents and a brother and sister reside. They eventually get caught in the act and must own up to the family that they indeed were the petty thieves. The illustrations are cute and vivid, and the print is large, making it suitable reading for six and seven year-olds.

Tom mouse contains pathos in its plot about a young Ottawa city mouse who is about to leave for a day in the country visiting his cousin. Initially full of bravado and enthusiasm about his trip to the farm on a farmer's egg truck Tom accidentally misses the correct stop and lands much chastened in the middle of a huge field, lost and forlorn in the rain. The rest of the narrative deals with various animals he meets on his way to the farm, some hostile and others helpful. This story is appropriate for the six to eight age group; the format is large print and framed pages with pen sketches in black and white.

Herman the house mouse portrays an adult male mouse, married to a nagging wife, Elsie. The question of his inadequacy in performing heroic feats of daring is raised by Elsie in the first episode; she is presented as a very snappy and competent female, in contrast to Herman who is rather meek and mild. Although Herman is able to pass the tests or challenges presented to him, he does so with some difficulty. The females are somewhat wiser — for example, Elsie cures a bee of obesity and Aunt Maggie provides "magic mistletoe" which reconciles the warring factions in the mouse community. The role models in this book

are not acceptable, unless one wishes to perpetuate a one-sided image of housewives and husbands. For this reason, I would not recommend this book for the age-group it appears suitable for (ten to twelve year-olds). The color-scheme is rather drab: brown, black, and orange; the print is small; the pictures are pen sketches on glossy paper.

The school mouse and the hamster is the most attractively and professionally illustrated and bound book, with its reinforced hard cover and dust jacket. The story concerns a young lad in elementary school (about grade three or four) who has to clean the boards after school for one week. During this time, he meets the resident mouse, who wants to get into the pet hamster's cage in order to try out the swing. An agreement is reached whereby the hamster is let free to roam and the mouse is permitted to swing to its heart's content. Jonathan is able to conceal this arrangement from the teacher, but when his week's duty is over, so is the animals' adventure. There is nothing controversial in this plot; yet it is playful and suspenseful. This book would appeal to children about Jonathan's age and perhaps foster harmony with the animal kingdom.

A similar theme might be seen in *Rosalyn rabbit* in which a girl helps a rabbit who dresses up as a child at Hallowe'en. To the rabbit's chagrin, none of the adults will give the "little girl" candy because they think she has no costume. When the real little girl finds Rosalyn in tears, she suggests they both pose as rabbits and, fortunately, this "trick" succeeds. In several other episodes rabbit and human co-operate with each other to fulfill a need. The print is fairly large type, and the color of the sketches is predominantly orange. This little book has an endearing quality and pastoral ambiance. It is suitable for girls in grade one or two, and promotes values of sharing and kindness.

Finally, *Ak'ak: a story for children*, is a slim black and white booklet about the adventures of an uncle wolf in the north who tries to obtain food for cubs and fends off hunters. The story strikes a sad note about the struggle for survival and ends with the message that the wolf will have to continue to fight for its young and food against humans bent on destruction. The print is very small and densely laid out on the pages; a few pencil sketches accompany the text. Perhaps boys aged eleven might enjoy reading this, but otherwise I doubt if it would appeal to youngsters. If the format were changed, no doubt it would be more pleasing to the eye; more print in larger size on each page, not so many bare spaces, more color: these changes would enhance the appearance. The theme of the story is courage in the face of danger and a spirit of protective concern for the helpless. While the plot has merit, the book should be laid out in a more stimulating style.

Angelika Maeser-Lemieux is currently on a leave-of-absence from Vanier College, Montreal, and working part-time at Mount Royal College in Calgary as well as on a book about Margaret Laurence's novels.