

Deux livres de Noël, donc, mais qui ont bien peu en commun. Dans l'un, une petite fille s'invente un rêve à sa mesure. L'autre est un rêve d'adulte à l'intention des enfants. Tous les deux, cependant, ont une fin heureuse. Amélie a retrouvé la paix et la bonne humeur. René (qui enfin s'éveille. . .) "est heureux, le Père Noël ne l'a pas oublié!" S'il suffisait vraiment d'acheter des cadeaux aux enfants pour qu'ils soient heureux! Il faudrait revoir René le lendemain de Noël: peut-être ressemblerait-il comme un frère à Amélie. . .

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#### BOOKS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

***Don't cut my hair, Little bear can't sleep, I love my babysitter, Peepee in the potty***, Sylvie Assathany and Louise Pelletier. Illus. Philippe Béha. 16 pp. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-771-8, 0-88862-769-6, 0-88862-768-8, 0-88862-770-X; ***A friend like you***, Roger Pare. Illus. author. Annick Press, 1983. 24 pp. \$10.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-920303-0408, 0-920-303-0506; ***My House***, Stephanie Anastasiu, ***The Train***, Mireille Levert, ***My street***, Marie-Josée Cote, ***The tree***, Philippe Béha. James Lorimer, 1985. Fold out Board \$2.95 each. ISBN 0-88862-765-3, 0-88862-764-5. 0-88862-776-1, 0-88862-763-7; ***Little Snowshoe***, Ellen Bryan Obed. Illus. William Ritchie. Breakwater Books, 1984. 32 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919519-29-6.

As the titles suggest, Sylvie Assathany and Louise Pelletier present topics common to early childhood in their quartet of tot-books. Most young children feel unhappy when parents go to work but sharing a plate full of spaghetti with the babysitter would soon dispel fears, as is shown in *I love my babysitter*.

Little Bear, in *Little bear can't sleep*, has had a bad dream and after trying to sleep in his parent's bed invites them to share his bed. Finally, he decides that the best way to sleep is "all by himself in his own little bed."

Hair cutting can be quite traumatic, and in *Don't cut my hair*, Dominique does not want to have her hair trimmed. As with long hair has its problems, she condescends to have a little trim.

All these books are in stiff board, and are highly suitable for the toddlers. Philippe Beha's illustrations are realistic and full of humour, especially those for *Peepee in the potty* (fig. 1). I was a little taken a back when I read "What a lovely poop" and I saw Catherine emptying her potty into the toilet, but

The dog pees outside,  
the cat in his box,  
and Catherine goes peepee  
in her potty.



children can certainly identify with the situation presented in the book and think “that’s me!”

*A friend like you*, as the title suggests, is about friendship, in particular, about a friendship between two cats. The tone is set in the first page: “Of all my friends, you are my favourite.” The sequence is loosely woven through daily and seasonal activities. The cats sing their joy to each other through hiking, reading, skiing and colouring.

While pictures are detailed and colourful, allowing the young readers the opportunity to pick out minute details, the text does not flow consistently through the pictures to a satisfactory conclusion. The title and the first page prepare the reader for a story about cats and friendship, but the second page reads “Spring is as gentle as the fur of kittens.” It then takes several pages of reading to return the reader’s mind to friends and friendship. The final page, which reads, “At night all cats look gray only you never do,” is difficult to understand, as the cat being addressed throughout the story is a sandy colour. The language used is frequently awkward, causing abrupt transitions from page to page. Continuity would have been more consistent if the page showing one cat reading to the other had been followed by the last page, where the cats are in bed for the night. It is also difficult to get one’s tongue around “dodo lala”, the sound that one of the cats makes when singing. It is a shame that the text in this “read-to-me” book is not of as high a quality as the illustrations.

Four books from the James Lorimer press take a different approach to the problems of early childhood needs in experiencing books. These books by artists Anastasiu, Levert, Cote, Beha are offered as “Little Big Books.” When closed they can be held comfortably in the hand but when opened out, they

extend to a length of 85 centimeters. It is the form of these books which is so fascinating. Children enjoy listening to the rasping sound of the velcro closing and they fasten and unfasten the books many times before opening them to their full length.

The books, when opened, reveal a tree, a house, a train or a street. Opening *The tree*, the child sees a cow gazing upwards, directing the reader's attention to a multitude of creatures. (I counted 52). The readers' eyes are guided upwards through the four seasons to the uppermost branches.

Each illustrator brings a distinctive style to the drawings. In *The house*, Grandma sits knitting and listens to her Walkman, Father prepares a meal in the kitchen, a racoon dives in a garbage pail.

On the reverse side of each book, a vocabulary of twelve words with pictures is displayed, helping the child associate a particular word with an object. The books are constructed of sturdy board and should stand up to frequent opening and closing. They are ideal beginner books which give many opportunities for interaction between adult and child and between beginning reader and book.

Finally, for Grade one classroom experience, I recommend *Little Snowshoe* [reviewed elsewhere in this issue].

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## POUR MIEUX S'ENTENDRE ENTRE FRÈRE ET SOEUR

*La soeur de Robert*, Marie-Louise Gay. Illus. auteur. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1983. 20 pp., 4,95\$. broché. ISBN 2-89021-038-3.

Destiné aux enfants de 3 à 8 ans, ce conte nous présente la petite Jonquille, collectionneuse de chenilles, et son frère aîné Robert, l'Ennemi. A travers une série de disputes qui trouveront certainement des échos chez les tout jeunes, l'auteur nous offre un livre où le conflit fraternel est illustré avec un dédain évident pour l'euphémisme. Menaces ("La guerre est déclarée"), violence ("il lui lance . . . quelques livres et un vieux soulier"), sadisme même lorsque Jonquille prend plaisir à entendre les cris apeurés de son frère dont le lit est envahi par des chenilles, tout y passe, avec illustrations à l'appui.

Celles-ci traduisent de manière extraordinaire au plan visuel l'animosité que ressentent les enfants l'un pour l'autre. Les personnages y sont volontairement stylisés au point de frôler le grotesque, représentation fidèle de l'image que se fait sans doute Jonquille de son frère et Robert de sa petite soeur au moment le plus intense de leur colère.