

portée du message sont assez restreintes.

Les stéréotypes sociaux et sexuels véhiculés dans la série des Bobbsey Twins ont déjà fait l'objet de nombreuses critiques. (B.A. Mason, *The girl sleuth: a feminist guide*, NY, The Feminist Press, 1975.) *Le mystère du caniche bleu* ne fait pas exception à la règle. D'une part, les Bobbsey sont de dignes représentants de la petite bourgeoisie américaine. Jouissant de fonds illimités, ils se promènent en taxi du matin au soir, suivent les suspects en calèche et ne prennent le métro que lorsqu'ils sont bien pressés. Ils se sustentent régulièrement dans des restaurants de luxe et se paient toutes leurs petites fantaisies. De quoi susciter l'envie et l'admiration chez bien des enfants!

D'autre part, les rôles sont catégoriquement délimités. Les petites filles sont des ballerines au coeur tendre, les garçons des durs qui s'intéressent au baseball:

"Moi, en tout cas, déclare à son voisin un garçon de la rangée suivante, avant qu'on me prenne à voltiger sur scène comme un vulgaire papillon, les poules auront des dents! Bon pour les filles, des simagrées pareilles! (p. 8-9)

Bert, l'aîné des garçons, s'attribue d'ailleurs le rôle de protecteur des filles. Non seulement servira-t-il d'écran à ses soeurs lors des attaques répétées de leurs agresseurs, mais il se préoccupera également de leur intégrité morale. Il le démontre assez bien lorsqu'il interdit à Nan, la jeune ballerine, de se promener en tutu:

"Tu ne vas pas sortir dans cet accoutrement! . . . tu risques fort d'attraper une pneumonie ou de te faire arrêter par la police." (p. 17-18)

Et ce sont bien sûr les garçons qui paieront les taxis et les consommations . . .

Pour conclure, ce livre nous semble très intéressant du point de vue de la construction de l'intrigue. Mais, à notre avis, il présente des lacunes importantes en ce qui concerne les aspects linguistique et social.

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GOOD CAUSES

Facing the nuclear age: parents and children together, Susan Goldberg. Illus. Molly Barker. Annick Press, 1985. 64 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-920303-29-3;

Play it safe: street smart activities for children, Barbara & Doug Hall. Illus. Carl Pickering. Methuen, 1984. 48 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-458-97650-4;

Lost in the woods, Colleen Politano. Illus. Doug Penhale. Porthole Press, 1984.

62 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-919931-04-9.

Adult concern for children's welfare has produced many worthy but undistinguished books. The three books under review, while admirable in intention, are distinctly mediocre in format and content.

Facing the Nuclear Age: parents and children together, a 6 inch x 7 1/2 inch paperback with several small black and white sketches, grew out of the efforts of *Parents for peace*, a group of people interested in educating parents about the nuclear arms issue. Addressed to the parents, the book contains three major sections. The introduction gives the rationale for the publication together with a short essay about children's fears of nuclear war. Section two deals with the parents' role in talking to children and with activities which they can engage in with them. The final section contains resource lists, together with addresses of helpful organizations.

Used selectively (the introduction itself says the book is only a beginning) the list of activities and resources could be helpful to concerned parents and teachers, though the list of periodical articles contains no titles more recent than 1982.

Playing it safe: street smart activities for children which looks very much like a primary school workbook is aimed at teaching 5-to-9-year-old children how to become "street-smart." Two children whose parents work outside the home go through a series of situations designed to educate them to the dangers of city living. Situations such as accidents, playing in unsafe houses, and talking to strangers are presented accompanied by line drawings followed by discussion questions.

The subtitle of the book may be misleading since the activities to be engaged in are limited to completing a crossword and an objective test as well as (presumably) colouring the uncoloured areas in the pictures. *Playing it safe* is broader in scope than the U.S. publication *Children color me telephone directory*. Another U.S. booklet *Help yourself to safety* by John and Reve Walsh, which deals primarily with child abuses and child-napping, covers some of the same ground but in a narrative style, the illustrations also indicating that it is directed at older children.

The most attractive of the books is *Lost in the woods*, a story about a young boy who survives in the woods because he remembered various pieces of advice given to him previously by his teacher. Following the story are descriptions of the activities that the teacher used with children in similar situations. Each activity is also accompanied by a detailed "recipe," which makes the descriptions of the activities redundant. Since a N.F.B. 20 minute film based on the book has also been made, the best use of *Lost in the woods* would seem to be in conjunction with the film which could carry the narrative and be followed by the activities given in the book.

Although each of the books presents a few new ideas and lists sources of

information, none of them would be a first purchase for teachers or parents. *Philomena Hauck* is Associate Professor and Director of the Education Materials Centre at the University of Calgary.

SEXUALITY AND THE YOUNG

A kid's first book about sex, Joani Blank. Illus. Marcia Quackenbush. Kids Can Press, 1985. 48 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919964-67-2.

How much? How soon? These are two dilemmas facing the responsible adult selector who must make a decision about a slim paperback designed for the 7-to-11-year-old. First published in the United States (1983), it has been the object of both controversy and praise as it tackles head-on the child's self-concept and curiosity about his/her body and the sexual pleasures it may afford. Answering questions which almost all inquisitive children have, the book in its frank and honest treatment of the subject matter is at times discomfiting to a somewhat inhibited reviewer.

There are advantages to speaking on subjects thought to be taboo at a certain age, when adults are present. The author and illustrator have chosen that age of childhood when much misinformation is bandied about, when there is a delight in giggling over what is thought to be "dirty", when there is a fear that maybe one is not normal and when there is a singular lack of tolerance for the one who is different. By discussing openly such topics as "touching", "feeling sexy (orgasm)", "masturbation", "sexual intercourse", and varying preferences in partners, the author alleviates hidden fears and promotes understanding of what may be too secret to talk about. Certainly if children are exposed to just enough correct information presented in a non-judgmental way, their whole attitude toward sexuality may assume a more balanced perspective. There is much room for thought and encouragement to ask questions. The author herself questions the reader who may respond at his/her own level of maturity.

Both the verbal and illustrative material are low key, honest, open, full of common sense and edged with humour. The pen and ink drawings are imaginative, whimsical, but not inaccurate. They are absolutely necessary to the commentary, but because of their occasionally specific nature, the adult reader again may feel uncomfortable. This issue is dealt with by author and illustrator early in the book. The author queries, "If you ask your mom or dad a question about sex, how will they look?" There follow six cartoonish reactions, the best of which shows part of an adult running away.

The writer establishes rapport with her readers at the beginning by speak-