

So, you turn to page 99 to find 16 questions on Anatomy which you will try to answer. Then, you will want to check them so you turn to page 153 to find three and a half pages of answers with explanations and diagrams.

For what it was designed to be — a study guide — I believe it is a good and useful book. But I imagine it would only be included in the libraries of serious Pony Club students and instructors.

Greg Unger has a B.Sc. in Animal Science from the University of Guelph, and has spent many years training and racing horses. He currently lives in Toronto.

TWO SETS TO PLEASE THE YOUNGEST

The sea, Philippe Béha. Illus. Author. James Lorimer, 1985, unpag. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-817-X; **The garden**, Philippe Béha. Illus. Author. James Lorimer, 1985, \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-819-6; **The farmyard**, Philippe Béha. Illus. Author. James Lorimer, 1985, \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-820-X; **The fridge**, Philippe Béha. Illus. Author. James Lorimer, 1985, \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-818-8; **Where is my dummy?** Sylvie Assathiany and Louise Pelletier. Illus. Philippe Béha. James Lorimer, 1985. 16 pp. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-777-7; **The bad day**, Sylvie Assathiany and Louise Pelletier. Illus. Philippe Béha. James Lorimer, 1985. 16 pp. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-778-5; **Grandma's visit**, Sylvie Assathiany and Louise Pelletier. Illus. Philippe Béha. James Lorimer, 1985. 16 pp. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-775-0; **My baby sister**, Sylvie Assathiany and Louise Pelletier. Illus. Philippe Béha. James Lorimer, 1985. 16 pp. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88862-776-9.

Bright, imaginative books for the youngest consumers are produced in abundance in Québec; James Lorimer is offering two of these attractive series in translation.

The format for the "Little big books" series is intriguing. Each sturdy boardbook rips open (Velcro-type fastening) to reveal a single brightly coloured scene. On the back are twelve pictures extracted from the main picture, together with the appropriate names. Unfortunately illustrations on the back do not always match those on the front and are in some cases misleading — e.g., an octopus with five legs!

The sea is pleasantly coloured with fun cartoon-like characters. The scene is quite fanciful with drum playing crabs and skipping lobsters. Chubby fish, complete with spurs, gallop across on frolicking seahorses. A diver dances with a top-hatted octopus. The picture is full of fantastic and, at

times, outlandish detail. Those parents with a biological background, or children who are very aware of nature, may not appreciate the style.

The fridge stands open and ready for action. There are wiggling maggots in the apples, chickens popping out of eggs, mice peeking from cheese houses — even the watermelon sports a bowler hat! Young readers were somewhat concerned with the little boy, reaching into the 'fridge, about to fall off his stool. Will the funny dog save him?

The illustrations for *The farmyard* are cartoon-like, and the colour is not very exciting. Here we see rabbits with soothers and sunbonnets, roosters smoking pipes, and turkeys wearing glasses! The accompanying pictures on the back are very different from those on the front. The concept of the farmyard is poorly presented.

The bright colour and clear design make *The garden* fun to look at. Busy happy children share the garden with picnicking rabbits and munching raccoons. This garden has its own fair share of weeds and interesting bugs to follow.

We liked *The sea* and *The garden* best in this series of boardbooks for babies to four-year-olds.

After enjoying *Don't cut my hair* from previous books in the "Tot books" series, we looked forward to following the trials and tribulations of Little Bear and his family. The format for these books again follows the board-book style with brightly coloured illustrations interspersed with text.

In *Where is my dummy?* Little Bear learns to cope without his soother. Children who have soothers relate well to the cries from Little Bear as he struggles to sleep without it. They too know that bedtime is hardest without their soother. Little Bear makes it through and is very proud of himself. The translation from the original French does seem a little stilted: e.g., "dummy" would probably be better as "soother".

In *Grandma's visit*, Little Bear spends some happy times with his grandmother. He draws her a picture of himself to remind her of him when she's back in her own house. The story is clear and the characters are easily recognized.

We found *The bad day* the most confusing in the series. We never do find out why things are so bad, or what really makes them better. Sharing with your baby sister and mother popping in with an apple seem to help. Is this the message?

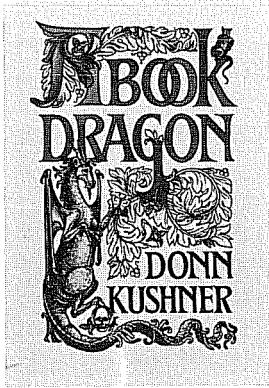
My baby sister was our favourite among the "Tot book" stories. The text was easy to follow, the illustrations were well proportioned and the message was simple — although little sisters can be annoying, they have their good points too! The layout of this book works well, with text on one page and uninterrupted pictures on the opposite. In other books in the series, the addition of balloon text proved confusing to the child we were reading to. These books are all of interest to the one to four-year-olds.

Hugh Ferguson teaches pathology at the Ontario Veterinary College.

Pam Ferguson has taught science and mathematics at the high school level.

“GUARD YOUR TREASURE”:

DONN KUSHNER’S FICTION FOR OLDER CHILDREN



A book dragon, Donn Kushner. Illus. Nancy Jackson. Macmillan, 1987. 208 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7715-9915-8.

“Guard your treasure.” Or could we say, “Defend your values”? This maxim, the motto of dragons from ancient times, is one of many moral lessons that children (and adults) will imbibe painlessly along with great dollops of fun, excitement and fantasy in Donn Kushner’s *A Book Dragon*.

In this, his third book for older children, Kushner hits his stride and establishes what may prove to be the trademark of his beautifully crafted longish fictions: an inspired mix of imagination, history, and ethical values. *Values*: does the word make us uneasy? Twentieth-century critics have managed to turn the concept of didacticism into a pejorative. Perhaps it is time to restore it to its rightful place. All great novelists are didactic, but not *simply* didactic: technique is all. Witness the work of Dickens, Tolstoi, and our own Margaret Laurence. Kushner’s work, like that of the masters, teaches children to value love, freedom, family ties, and integrity. To these universals we can add *books*, the particular treasure featured in his third novella.

Something of Kushner’s own attitude to writing seems to be implied in a speech made by the golden bird in his first novella, *The Violin-Maker’s gift* (1980), set in the French Pyrenees just after the Napoleonic Wars. The prophetic bird tells its benefactor: “Poetry and parables are all very well when you’re a captive and have to hide your meaning or when you’re feeling very elated. . . . But for the ordinary business of life, give me direct prose.” Kushner’s prose is indeed direct, and strong, but not without its poetic side. Witness part of the description of the magical bird: “The golden bars on its wings had spread, and their colours were so intense that the wings seemed to be encased in a living network of metal. . . . The crest of golden feathers on his head had grown to a comb that shone like wheat in