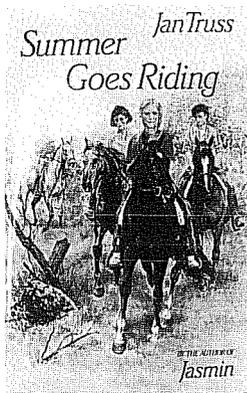


peuplée de personnages campagnards, tels l'oncle Pacifique et le père La-débauche, qui ne manquent pas de pittoresque. On y donne le pas à l'humour, surtout à des gags verbaux. Plus récemment on constate que l'humour est toujours important, mais qu'il sert la plupart du temps un but satirique ou contestataire. Ces bandes, destinées à un public adulte, sont appréciées d'un nombre de lecteurs restreint (environ 1500); les revues où elles paraissent jouissent d'une espérance de vie modeste. Les expériences pédagogiques dont on nous rend compte se font avec des récits d'aventures (*Tintin, Astérix, Lucky Luke*) ou des albums de gags visuels (*Boule et Bill, Gaston la Gaffe*) produits tous dans les ateliers des grandes écoles franco-belges. Ce sont d'ailleurs ces bandes importées qui sont les grands succès de librairie. La bande dessinée québécoise, souvent en noir et blanc, semble en effet très souvent un lieu de recherche qui ne vise que rarement un public jeune. Voilà de toute façon l'impression très nette qui se dégage de la lecture des actes de ce colloque. Les exceptions à cette règle qui viennent à l'esprit (*Bojoul le Huron-Kébécois, Alexis le trotteur, Electrozz et Bozz*) ne font l'objet d'aucun commentaire. On doit en conclure qu'auprès de nos critiques, bibliothécaires et enseignants, ces bandes n'ont pas pu s'imposer face à la concurrence féroce des albums importés.

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#### A PONY STORY, PLUS



**Summer goes riding**, Jan Truss. Groundwood, 1987. 164 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-061-8.

A review of Jan Truss's work previous to *Summer goes riding* suggests that here is a writer who doesn't like to repeat herself. Her first novel, *Bird at the window*, deals with the theme of teenage pregnancy; her second novel, *A very small rebellion*, features Métis teenagers who put on a play about Louis Riel; her third novel, *Jasmin*, is about a girl who runs away from her family to live in coyote dens. And then there are Jan Truss's plays,

short stories, and poetry.

But why this book? Both the title, *Summer goes riding*, and the cover art showing four teenagers on horses, suggest the girl-and-horse genre so popular in the 1950s. In fact, the situation and the characters of Jan Truss's fourth novel will be familiar to readers who remember all those books with

titles like *A horse for Sheila*. *Summer goes riding* is about a girl with a dream of horses and the way she spends her summer after graduating from grade eight. However Jan Truss's accomplishment is to write a book that revitalizes the conventional girl-and-horse genre while going beyond it.

The four main characters, who are all about fourteen, are united by their interest in horses: the central character Charlotte Mauney is a dreamer with a passion to be a champion horsewoman; Red Wallinger works at his father's stable; Charlotte's best friend Maggie Vogel has compromised her dream for the perfect horse by giving her heart to an elderly pony Blanche, about to be sold by the Wallinger stable for pet food; Sidney Topham, a rich boy home for the summer from his English public school, owns the perfect golden colt All Gold that Charlotte covets. *Summer goes riding* develops the relationships among these four characters as they pursue their interest in horses and in each other over one summer holiday.

The book is structured on a set of polarities: the dreamers and the people who have given up their dreams; people with money and people without; parents and children. Charlotte's parents, who are shown through their daughter's eyes, are presented as unromantic figures, worn down by the economic hardships of raising sheep in Nebraska. Charlotte's grandfather Joshua, who comes for a visit after a ten year absence, represents for Charlotte the link with the romantic past: especially with his grandmother Carlotta, a horsewoman who died young and whose ghost is said to ride on stormy nights. Charlotte's grandfather promises her grandly, "I'll give you a horse and the stars in the sky, and the birds that fly high in a city." But his actual gift is a postcard saying, "This is the best I can do," and a breeder pig Rosie.

The whole novel is well-crafted, but it achieves a kind of distinction in the second half in which the four main characters move, dream-like, through a series of episodes that include a midnight séance in a graveyard, a chase for a runaway horse, a tornado, destruction, and near-tragedy. (Readers who prefer positive endings will be reassured by the ending which is upbeat without being unrealistic.) Altogether *Summer goes riding* succeeds as a girl-and-horse book but offers readers some interesting and unexpected extras.

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