

I guess I'm somewhere in the middle" (98) and he has accepted the fact that his mother will remarry. He has also come to terms with himself. As he writes: "The past few months have been a bit crazy. The letters that I wrote to you are the one thing that tied it all together" (133), Terry can take responsibility for his relationships with his family. He initiates communication and no longer feels the victim, a valuable lesson for any person of any age.

Of all Major's books, this is the least obviously set in Newfoundland. Traces of the dialect remain in the way Terry phrases some sentences, and in his word choice. And for the person familiar with the setting, Napoli's Pizza and a few other such references strike a chord. But for the most part, *Dear Bruce Springsteen* could be set anywhere in rural North America.

Kevin Major has already been recognized as an important Canadian children's author. The title of *Dear Bruce Springsteen* may attract many new readers. They have a treat in store, not only with this novel, but in discovering the three that came before.

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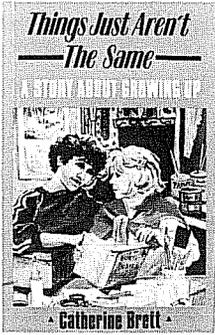
#### ACCEPTABLE PRE-TEEN NOVELS



**My impossible uncle**, Raymond Plante. Scholastic-TAB, 1984. 94 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-71699-9; **Things just aren't the same: a story about growing up**, Catherine Brett. Illus. Yvonne Indart. Women's Press, 1987. 104 pp. \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88961-115-7; **One chance to win**, Gillian Richardson. Illus. Em Lachance. Ragweed Press, 1986. 112 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-920304-56-7.

These three Canadian books are all written for the age group ten to thirteen, but the themes and topics differ widely. *My impossible uncle* (written by Raymond Plante and translated from the French by Rochelle Lisa Ash) is a light-hearted romp about a girl (Julie) whose actress mother has left her in the hands of her lovable but irresponsible Uncle Philibert for a few weeks. The mother, in Europe making a film, keeps in touch periodically by telephone. The divorced father performs a minor role in the story; he is stuffy, ineffectual and somewhat detached from Julie's life except when he is personally embarrassed by

her activities, or by media coverage of Uncle Philibert's antics as a marathon flagpole sitter.



The story, told in the first person, is complete froth, and more than a bit unbelievable. However, ten-year-olds will enjoy the way in which Julie takes hold and shows more initiative and resourcefulness than any of the adults.

*Things just aren't the same: a story about growing up* attempts to combine sex education with a fictional setting. Anita and Brian are two friends with a keen interest in applied science, and it is refreshing to have a girl as an equal partner in the frustrating challenge of building an airplane. This is a traditionally middle-class-story – the parents are intelligent, supportive

and available, and the point may be that even in such ideal situations puberty is still a difficult time for boys and girls. Anita and Brian have reached the age when their bodies are changing, and they are curious and inhibited by this fact and by sex, in general.

The author's worthy attempt to incorporate important sexual information within a story line does not really succeed. Because of a forced and somewhat cumbersome structure, the story is unsatisfactory at both levels – as a short novel and as a source of information about sex. On the positive side, there is a glossary (*Words You Might Not Know*), and an up-to-date list of books and pamphlets to lead the young reader to other reference sources available to Canadian children. It is frequently discouraging to read in other books about information sources for books and pamphlets on sex education which are available only in the United States.

Just as the Montreal setting enhances *My impossible uncle*, the Prince Edward Island setting forms an integral part of the story in *One chance to win*. Ten-year-old Wink dreams of winning a special camera in a photography contest which has been set up to encourage tourism in Prince Edward Island.



Wink's family is going through a difficult time because the tractor on their farm has broken down. Cooperation is needed from all members of the Winsloe family – mother, father and three sons – to pay for a replacement tractor. This means that Wink cannot afford to purchase sufficient film for his old camera to provide him with a choice of many photographs for entry into the contest.

Wink is lucky enough to get a summer job at a kennel where Sarah and Jack Harding are raising prize

golden retrievers. The story moves along at a lively pace as Wink gains in maturity as he learns how to care for the lively dogs. A fire provides an exciting climax, and Wink gets his heart's desire in an unexpected way.

Author Gillian Robertson's style is natural and well-paced. Dialogue is unforced and true to life. Em Lachance's drawings form an appropriate accompaniment as the story unfolds. The setting is indeed an integral part of the story, and provides readers with a sense of what life is like for a child growing up in rural Prince Edward Island.

It is encouraging to see more and more Canadian novels written for children in this age bracket. Although *One chance to win* is the best of these three, they are all acceptable for purchase by Canadian libraries which serve children.

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## JEUNES FILLES EN FLEUR

**Eclipses et jeans**, Chantal Cadieux. Montréal, Fides, 1987. 128 pp. 9,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-7621-1375-X.

Chantal Cadieux, jeune auteur d'à peine 20 ans, et dont le roman *Longueur d'ondes* a obtenu le premier prix au Palmares de Communication Jeunesse, nous livre avec *Eclipses et jeans* sa deuxième oeuvre. Journal d'une jeune fille de quinze ans, c'est le roman pour adolescentes par excellence. Elles y retrouveront leur propre vie avec ses joies et ses problèmes, contée dans un langage qui leur est familier. L'aventure, c'est la vie de tous les jours, telle qu'elle est vécue et surtout ressentie par la narratrice elle-même.

L'histoire se déroule en une année et suit le cycle bien connu dans la littérature pour jeunes: Départ-Crise-Retour. Nous rencontrons l'héroïne, Anne-Sophie, à quinze ans; nous la quittons juste après son seizième anniversaire.

Une longue description nous familiarise avec la vie de tous les jours de cette jeune fille gaie et naturelle qui s'amuse, entourée de ses amis. Puis, elle vit son premier amour. Chantal Cadieux en décrit les joies et les peines; elle parle librement de l'amour physique, des angoisses d'une grossesse non désirée, comme des chagrins d'amour.

Vient la crise: un déménagement sépare subitement les deux amants. La jeune héroïne vit cette séparation comme une déchirure que seule le temps saura guérir.

Le thème de l'amour perdu reste secondaire, celui de la séparation, de la rupture et du déracinement constituant l'essentiel du conflit traité dans cette