

texte n'est pas difficile à lire. Les illustrations sont agréables à regarder et bien marrantes parfois. Les enfants de 9 à 11 ans le liront avec plaisir.

Malgré quelques faiblesses au niveau de l'enchaînement, cette histoire présente des concepts et idées bien méritoires. François Pratte utilise un style personnel et ceci plaira au jeunes lecteurs. Il a surtout le mérite d'avoir choisi un thème peu traité qui doit être sérieusement considéré par les jeunes et les moins jeunes lecteurs.

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## DELIGHTS FROM HENRIETTE MAJOR

**The end of the world.** Henriette Major. Illus. Philippe Béha. Trans. Alan Brown. McClelland & Stewart, 1988. unpag., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-5472-6; **The Christmas elves.** Henriette Major. Illus. Stéphane Poulin. Trans. Alan Brown. McClelland & Stewart, 1988. Unpag., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-5473-4.

In the best picture-story books text and illustrations blend to create a unified whole in which a captivating story is told in two media. This is the case in both *The end of the world* and *The Christmas elves*. In both books readers are introduced to magical worlds and delightful characters. In both, full page paintings interpret and extend a simple but interesting story line with appropriate balance and harmony.

The drake in *The end of the world* is content to remain in the shimmering pond, the edge of which is the end of the world for him. But the duck's world vision is larger. For her the end of the world is always beyond the present circumstances. Undaunted by discouragement or danger, she relentlessly pursues her quest--even to Madagascar!

Major's delightful text is superbly complemented by Béha's illustrations, creating a world as charming as it is convincing. The illustrations leave no doubt about the duck's strength of character. There is some doubt, however, concerning the ending of the story. Do her adventures eventually bring the duck back to her roots--and to the drake? The text and the illustrations appear to disagree on this matter.

In *The Christmas elves*, when a poor growing season ruins their harvest of Christmas tree decorations, farmers Bing and Bong travel south to the Caribbean in search of the coloured balls and lights which are so essential to Christmas celebrations. In the land of Somewhere Else they meet Ping and Pong

who have had an abundant harvest with a surplus of decorations for export. The four establish friendly trading relations and arrange for a successful if unusual delivery system. Consequently, there are no bare Christmas trees in the north that season and the reputations of Bing and Bong are assured. Poulin's vibrant paintings depict well the two fantasy worlds in which the elves, a duck, a friendly whale and a monstrous moose all play important roles.

*The end of the world* and *The Christmas elves* are both likely to have considerable appeal for young children. Unfortunately, they will not stand up well to wide usage. They deserve a better binding.

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### EASY-READING ADVENTURE STORIES

**A horse for Josie Moon.** Sharon Siamon. Lorimer, 1988. 153 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-129-1; **A question of courage.** Irene Morck. Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988. 169 pp., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-88833-257-2.

*A horse for Josie Moon*, written for Lorimer's "Blue Kite adventure" series of easy novels, returns us to the Big Pickle Lake community of *Fishing for trouble*. As the story opens Siamon pokes a little fun at the "horse story" genre. Eleven-year-old Josie narrowly avoids piloting her father's powerboat into a neighbour's rowboat while daydreaming about riding imaginary "Panther", a wild black stallion she has bent to her will. Josie must figure out how to acquire a horse and keep it on her tiny island, while evading the ridicule of her arch rival Kiff. A blueberrying expedition leads to the discovery of four abandoned horses, but they are rough, burr-matter and wild. In a fast-paced denouement the children unite to save the horses from hunters and a forest fire. Josie's dream is realised, but modified, leaving her with a better understanding of the realities of horsekeeping.

An established author of juvenile fiction, Siamon has produced a competently-crafted tale within the confines of the beginner novel. There is one slip ("like it was") and an apparent confusion of halter and bridle. The horse "Skydive"'s actions stretch likelihood and I regret the lack of caution about mixing inexperienced children with unschooled horse. The theme is a perennial favourite and the plot moves briskly. The characters, though not rounded, are sufficiently defined to invite reader involvement. The children are capable and refreshingly non-sexist; their dialogue, full of amiable insult, is believable.