when they have turned blue-gray, they have become too slow to catch much more than leaves and flowers,"

The book is rich in beautiful photographs of lizards, birds, toads, snakes, insects, a touching mother sloth with its child, several intelligent monkeys, a large mother scorpion, its back loaded with its young, and a few sympathetic humans. There are striking illustrations of ways in which animals and insects use camouflage to catch prey or avoid becoming prey.

"Because everything is connected in the forest," the author writes, "life and death are never wasted." The strangler fig tree grows around and kills other trees, but also provides home and food for insects, bats and other creatures. Other examples also illustrate recycling of matter in the biological world, the death of one part leading to the life of another.

As the book points out, the tropical rain forests are an irreplaceable biological treasure house: they make up only 6% of the earth's surface but contain two-thirds of its species of plants and animals. Curiously, in urging their preservation, the author does not mention their role in controlling the carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere by photosynthesis: without this, carbon dioxide will increase yet more, with an accompanying "greenhouse effect" and likely a disastrous rise in the temperature of our environment. The author must know this. Perhaps he feels that the life of the lovely creatures in the forests is still more important than human comfort. He may well be right.

This book can be strongly recommended for reading and rereading by children and adults.

Donn Kushner, *a Professor of Microbiology at the University of Toronto, has also published a book of short stories and three children's books, most recently* "A book dragon" *Macmillan, 1987.*

AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE

Mystery in the frozen lands. Martyn Godfrey. James Lorimer, 1988. 132 pp., $19.95 $9.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-144-5, 1-55028-137-2.

A common complaint heard among intermediate and junior high-school students is that studying Canadian history is so boring! Contrary to this view, Martyn Godfrey's historical novel for teenagers, *Mystery in the frozen lands*, is a compelling page-turner from the first paragraph: "George Brand, our engineer, is dead. Four days ago he placed a musket under his chin and pulled the trigger." Set in the mid-nineteenth century, Godfrey's book provides the young reader with an exciting adventure story while introducing him to an in-

Mystery in the frozen lands deals with Captain Francis McClintock's 1857-59 voyage in search of Sir John Franklin, who had disappeared mysteriously in 1847 while searching for the elusive Northwest Passage. Although Franklin had explored and mapped much of the Arctic coastline on two earlier voyages, it is his disappearance and death on the third voyage – leading to the dispatch of numerous search parties over the next twelve years – which have kept his memory alive. To this day, historians wonder why Franklin and all 128 crewmen perished in spite of their extensive Arctic experience and the presence of Inuit in the area. The recent exhumation of three of Franklin's sailors buried on Beechey Island and the discovery that their bodies had been extremely well-preserved by the Arctic permafrost have caused renewed interest in the subject. In addition the recent photographs of the sailor's bodies in such widely read magazines as *National Geographic* and *Macleans* have brought new publicity to Franklin's voyage and made the publication of Godfrey's novel a timely one.

On one level *Mystery of the frozen lands* is a tale of the adventures of a ship's boy Peter Griffin, his Inuit friend Anton, and their fellow crew members who were sent to the Arctic to discover the fate of Sir John Franklin. A second level of the story unfolds as, through entries in Peter's journal, we gradually learn why Franklin went to the Arctic twelve years earlier, when he disappeared, and where his men were last seen. Speculation by McClintock's men, information provided by Inuit hunters, and descriptions of difficulties encountered by McClintock's own crew introduce the reader to some possible explanations of Franklin's fate – treacherous ice conditions, scurvy, food poisoning, starvation, madness and suicide. A third story emerges: the romance between Peter and his cousin Elisabeth. Through this aspect of the book, we get a picture of the lifestyle, values and attitudes of mid-nineteenth century England. While this theme is not as well-developed as the other two, it does provide an interesting contrast to the hardships of the northern expedition. Finally, Godfrey gives us an all-too-brief glimpse of the Inuit lifestyle and philosophy, often in conflict with the European experience.

Because Godfrey's book is written as a journal, from the point of view of a fourteen-year-old boy, the story contains emotion, humanity and realism which might have been missing in a straight-forward factual account. Since the two main characters, Peter and Anton, are teenagers, young readers will find it easy to identify with their feelings of excitement, frustration, fear and relief as the search progresses. In the discussions between the two boys, the reader learns about both the British and the Inuit cultures of the time. Peter's journal vividly describes the harsh winter climate where the sun has van-

ished: "leaving just a feeble glow in the southern sky" (1) and where the wind is constantly blowing around the frozen ship "trying to put its long, cold tentacles inside" (4). We are provided with graphic descriptions of the sailors' day-to-day lives – their entertainment, their constant battle against lice and rats, and their cramped living quarters below deck where smelly fat lamps cover the walls with black grease and fill the air with a burnt-lard smell (17). Our sympathy is aroused for Peter, who as ship's boy, must scrub the crew's living quarters, serve the officers, wash clothes, make beds, help the cook, tidy the decks and still find time to spare for hunting, studying navigation and mapping and writing a journal! Small details such as these make history come alive as textbook accounts could never do.

While Godfrey does give some information about Inuit beliefs and lifestyle, he could have provided more details about the native culture. After all, one important factor in the success or failure of the various Arctic expeditions was the extent to which the explorers were willing to take on the ways of the Inuit among whom they travelled. The British in particular often refused to adopt native survival techniques, thus bringing unnecessary hardships upon themselves – this may have been the key factor in the Franklin disaster. Character development of the Europeans is also much more realistic than of the Inuit. While the conversation between the British crewman sounds true to life, the speech of Anton the Greenlandic Inuk does not always ring true. As far as I know, for example, Inuit do not habitually end their sentences with the negative.

Martyn Godfrey's novel offers enough mystery and suspense to keep the reader interested. However the end of the book is not really the end of the story, because I'm sure *Mystery of the frozen lands* will leave many young readers with the desire to learn more about Sir John Franklin and those who searched for him. This book would make an excellent introduction to the study of Arctic exploration and the search for a Northwest Passage, which consumed the resources of so many nineteenth-century adventurers.

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NOTDOG ET L'ABOMINABLE HOMME DES NEIGES

Le mystère du lac Carré. Sylvie Desrosiers. Illus. Daniel Sylvestre. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1988. 95 pp., 6,95$ ISBN 2-89021-079-0.