

mot dans son contexte aidera le lecteur lui-même à retenir le sens.

S'il faut trouver à redire à ce roman, c'est le dénouement qui est un peu décevant. On nous demande d'accepter la crédulité des voleurs qui: "étaient tellement occupés à admirer leur butin qu'ils sont restés cloués sur place lorsqu'ils ont vu l'arme de Fer" (92). Il s'agit ici d'une imitation de fusil fabriqué par "FER, LE FERRAILLEUR LE PLUS FERRÉ EN VILLE" (78) "en assemblant diverses pièces de métal" (96). La fin aurait pu mieux combler nos attentes si l'auteur avait pu imaginer un dénouement plus vraisemblable et à la hauteur de l'inspiration du reste de son histoire.

Malgré cette petite faiblesse, les parents et les professeurs feraient un choix excellent avec *Une enquête toute garnie*; livre bourré d'aventures, de suspens, d'humour et de talent littéraire.

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DEGRASSI JUNIOR HIGH: TRANSITION FROM THE TUBE TO THE PRINTED PAGE

Shane. Susin Nielsen. Lorimer, 1989. 188 pp., \$16.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-237-9, 1-55028-235-2; **Melanie.** Susin Nielsen. Lorimer, 1989. 188 pp., \$16.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-254-9, 1-55028-256-5; **Joey Jeremiah.** Kathryn Ellis. Lorimer, 1989. 170 pp., \$16.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-233-6, 1-55028-231-X; **Lucy.** Nazneen Sadiq. Lorimer, 1989. 171 pp., \$16.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55028-239-5, 1-55028-238-7.

Speaking English or dubbed into other languages, the students of Toronto's fictional Degrassi Junior High are known in some 40 countries world-wide. Winner of multiple Geminis and Emmies, "Degrassi Junior High" and its sequel, "Degrassi High" have proven to be "quality" television. Degrassi Junior High devotees can still catch the show via reruns, or they may find themselves "studying" Degrassi via videotapes and discussion/activity guides marketed to schools. As Degrassi translates itself into print, the standards against which it must be judged shift, and two fundamental questions arise: "Are the books as good as the television programs?" and "How well do Degrassi books measure up against other young adult titles?"

Obviously, each format offers certain advantages. Television's visual qualities make "telling" about characters' physical qualities unnecessary, whereas readers initially meeting Yick in the book *Melanie* must be told he is "a Vietnamese boy." Print can provide readers a greater sense of intimacy: Shane can share his private thought, "All he ever wanted was to be accepted by his parents

and the kids at school." The books lose both the "busyness" of the television school settings of classrooms and hallways and the subtle information about social groupings which can be presented visually. Degrassi's television episodes generally present a number of ongoing plot lines involving a variety of "players," but the books restrict themselves to the actions and problems of a single character with readers in charge of the pace.

When comparing Degrassi books with other YA literature, should the yardstick be "problem novels" or "series" books? The Degrassi scripts' subject matter blazes trails in television directed at an adolescent viewing market; but problem novel readers are only too familiar with the Degrassi books' content matter of adolescents' coping with difficulties of school, peers and parents. The books' attractive cover design screams "mass market series!" Titles are limited to the characters' names; the covers subordinate authorship to the series title. Absence of subtitles which could indicate a story's direction, coupled with the use of "series numbering" serves to remind readers that what they are purchasing is, first and foremost, a Degrassi "product."

In a sense, Degrassi titles serve as souvenirs, much like programs from rock concerts. Although seemingly designed to stand alone, the print versions remain connected and subordinate to their television "parents." Just seeing a Degrassi cover, dominated by a full-colour photo of the central character, is to receive an immediate suggestion of a familiar character, an old, comfortable friend who will not behave in unexpected ways. Unknown to adolescent readers, the print form Degrassi characters cannot expand beyond the way they are revealed on the show, since manuscripts are edited not only by the publisher, Lorimer, but also by the characters' "owners," Playing With Time Inc. Furthermore, some of the authors, such as Kathryn Ellis and Susin Nielsen, are also script writers for the show.

Books in the Degrassi series divide themselves into two types. Some, such as *Shane* and *Melanie*, are print versions of major plot lines which have run through numerous episodes of the television series: in action they adhere closely to the shows' scripts. Others, like *Lucy* and *Joey Jeremiah*, are essentially invented stories anchored to the show by passing references to episode happenings with which regular viewers would be familiar. Extended time settings seem to characterize the former books while the invented stories appear to occur within a truncated time period, leaving the impression that the books' events happened during those invisible moments the characters were not "on camera."

Yet *Lucy*, *Shane*, *Joey Jeremiah* and *Melanie* offer early adolescents a pleasant, undemanding read.

Fifteen-year-old Lucy Fernandez, interpreting her working parents' absence as indifference, decides to take a secret three-day Bahamas holiday financed with her mother's "borrowed" credit card. Lucy's journey is thwarted, and initial parental anger is replaced, perhaps too facilely, by understanding:

Lucy's mother concludes, "I guess we are going to have to do something about being home more."

The kind of parental attention Lucy sees as caring, fourteen-year-old Shane McKay calls controlling. Shane, a preacher's kid, loses his goody-two-shoes school image when he dates the popular Spike, but a single, unplanned sexual episode results in Spike's becoming pregnant. While *Spike* tells the story of pregnancy and single parenthood from the unmarried mother's perspective, *Shane* reveals the experiences of an unwed father. Shane's efforts to cope involve separating himself from his parents' control— and also from the shield they offer him.

Also seeking a second chance is fourteen-year-old Joey Jeremiah, a bright underachiever. Joey's initial response to failing grade eight is simple: he sees playing in a musical group as a first step toward school-escaping fame. Following the group's third-place finish, Joey comes to the socially acceptable realization that "he wasn't going to drop out after all."

The protagonist in *Melanie*, a self-professed ugly duckling and aspiring romance novelist, exhibits many characteristics typically associated with junior high students – concern over appearance, embarrassment, readiness to lie her way out of difficult situations. The book's credibility-stretching conclusion includes Melanie's getting her first story accepted by a magazine.

While the television series "Degrassi Junior High," has served to demonstrate what television for adolescents might be, the same "leadership" qualities are not evidenced in the print form. Without the television show's presence to prop up the Degrassi books, they would just be another series fighting for readers' attention amongst the dozens already overcrowding book store shelves.

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L'INTROVERSION FANFARONNE

Le nombril du monde. Jean-Marie Poupart. Montréal: La courte échelle, 1990. 157 pp., broché. ISBN 2-89021-121-5.

Le court récit *Le nombril du monde* de Jean-Marie Poupart, romancier québécois bien connu, vient ajouter à la série des livres de "La courte échelle", maison d'édition montréalaise pour la jeunesse dont la réussite s'étend maintenant à l'étranger, (qu'on l'appelle Paris ou Toronto), sa petite somme propre de références et/ou leçons culturelles à l'usage de lecteurs(trices) bien de leur temps. Par ailleurs, ce dernier roman porte peut-être mal son titre puisque le héros Alex, adolescent de 15 ans, qui reçoit de son père le blâme plutôt attendu à cet âge de "se prendre pour le nombril du monde" s'avère en fait un