

Two of the plays selected seem dated. *The merchants of Dazu* by James Defelice is a moralistic play about greed in a folktale setting. The clever use of the two narrators for the supporting actors is innovative and would be fun to see on stage, but the play has the tone of Chorpenning's *The emperor's new clothes* (1931). *A nest of dragons* by Zina Barnieh is both heroic and comic, but the theme of the play is unclear. The hero needs to tame dragons whose parents he has slain. The special effects (shadows of the dragons' flight) could be beautiful, but the hero's confusing need to conquer nature is not timely and his wish to tame wild eagles at the end of the play shows he has not learned from his experience. The aims of the play, and the hero, are unclear.

The most fantastic of these plays is *Prairie dragons* by Sharon Pollock in which the dragons really do exist in our twentieth-century world, accepted by both characters and audience. This is the best-written play in the collection with the riddling dragon using poetic word-play. The heroine, Sarah, is feisty and persevering as she runs a farm on her own during a prairie drought.

Fantasy can be staged; simple and playful design can create special effects without destroying the day-dream. Joyce Doolittle has given us guidance, scripts and design solutions for achieving success when staging fantasies for children.

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EXPLORING THE HUMAN ANATOMY

My body inside out: An introduction to human anatomy. Marie-Francine Hébert. La courte echelle, 1989. \$19.95 1 book, 1 guide, 1 game. ISBN 276-256-4115.

Author Hébert, in consultation with medical professionals, has created A Read, Play and Learning Set to aid children in discovering facts about their bodies. Her premise is that children enjoy learning about themselves by looking at photo albums and hearing stories about their growth. The book presents a series of events in a child's development going full circle from infancy to producing an infant. Each episode highlights parts of a child's anatomy and its functions.

The descriptions of various bodily functions are brief yet packed with facts and new vocabulary which will spark questions from the child – an excellent opportunity for expanding on the text and illustrations.

Intended for ages five and up, the book's vocabulary is fairly sophisticated and younger children will require help with both the words and concepts. The text is frank and concise, but uneven. Hébert uses correct terminology for body

parts including the genitals, but refers to bodily wastes in babyish slang terms. Another disappointment is the cardboard exclamatory interjections: a case of the text not trusting the illustrations to convey the moods of excitement and amazement.

A second component of the set is an information guide which provides "supplementary information and answers which might arise when reading the book". However, the information used to answer these questions is based on statistics for an adult's bodily functions. The author either loses sight of her audience – or tries to educate the adult as well. The intent is unclear. Better to have provided facts relevant to the child using tangible measures.

Also in the set is a board game patterned on "Snakes and ladders". (Playing pieces and dice are included.) The game is intended to show children how events/actions affect their health. However, the "if - then" conditions presented are too black and white, bordering on being didactic. (If you sit too close to the TV, you will have poor vision – a snake. If you play with alphabet building blocks, you will learn how to read – a ladder.) A younger child would not likely understand several of the inferences.

The binding element which facilitates the flow between the components is the illustrative work of Darcia Labrosse. She has captured the spirit of childhood, appealing to their sense of humour by animating the children's pets and stuffed toys in both the book and the game board. In the information guide, she has provided simple yet thorough illustration of the anatomy. The latter illustrations might have been more useful to the child if included in the book rather than the guide.

In spite of several limitations, the set is a good resource to supplement other materials on growth, development and self-discovery for young children.

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NON-FICTION: SOME RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Wonderstruck II. Bob McDonald and Eric Grace. Illus. Gary Pearson and Sandra Hemsworth. CBC Enterprises, 1989. 96 pp., \$10.95 paper. ISBN 0-88794-360-8; **The dinosaurs: A new discovery.** Janet Stewart. Illus. Chris Walker. Cyril Hayes Press, 1989. 32 pp., \$13.95, \$5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88625-234-2, 0-88625-235-0; **Nature what's it?** Ed., Lyn Thomas. Owl: Greedy de Pencier Books, 1989. 32 pp., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-920775-38-1; **Looking at the environment.** David Suzuki, with Barbara Hehner. Stoddart, 1989. 92 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5255-2; **The serendipity effect.** Larry Verstraete. Scholastic-Tab, 1989. 124 pp., \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-71889-4; **The**