

depth of Poulin, the dramatic use of colour of Pratt, they are nonetheless rich in humour, relevant to the text and crazy, a word meant kindly here, in orientation. Her characters and all their paraphernalia are always jumping, bounding, exploding in a kind of Alice in Wonderland raciness.

Willy Nilly, as in one of Gay's previous books, *Rainy day magic*, also depicts the transformative power of magic and imagination. In this case, it's imagination bereft of intellectual control and moral purpose. Willy receives a mysterious birthday present enabling him to become a powerful magician. Without learning everything there is to know about what he's doing, he transforms his sister Tulip into a pink elephant, but cannot find the way of changing her back again. What is worse, his magic goes to his head: "I must be the most powerful magician in the world. I could be the king of magicians."

How Willy's egomania is deflated and how his "victims" are restored to their true forms are told in a brisk and clear style. Unlike Poulin, she has a storytelling ability that goes beyond whimsy. Both text and energetic pictures of *Willy Nilly* will keep readers interested and their sense of justice satisfied.

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PICTURE BOOKS OF VARYING QUALITY

Mortimer Mooner stopped taking a bath! Frank Edwards. Illus. John Bianchi. Bungalo Books, 1990. Unpag., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-921285-20-5; **P. Bear's New Year's party!** Paul Owen Lewis. Silvio Mattacchione & Co., 1989. Unpag., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-9692640-8-9; **Thomas knew there were pirates living in the bathroom.** Beth Parker. Illus. Renée Mansfield. Black Moss Press, 1990. Unpag., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-201-2; **Jane's loud mouth.** Rachna Gilmore. Illus. Kimberly Hart. Ragweed Press, 1990. Unpag., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-921556-10-1; **Binky Bemelman and the big city begonia.** Mia Hansen. Black Moss Press, 1990. Unpag., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-206-3.

Not every picture book is destined to become an award-winning piece of art or literature. Some picture books deserve to be purchased simply because they offer children the opportunity to compare and evaluate, a useful exercise in its own right. These books provide reading practice and the opportunity to flex a child's imagination. Having said that, one must be careful not to promote marginal books. With book budgets shrinking, no one can afford to buy poor quality books for the sake of teaching discriminating taste. And publishers must take the responsibility of producing quality books instead of allowing me-

diocrity as a standard.

Of the following six books several have merit in that they do the job they set out to do. The others are books not recommended for purchase; they raise the question of how some books get published.

Top on the list is *Mortimer Mooner stopped taking a bath!* a new Bungalow Book for preschoolers by Frank B. Edwards and John Bianchi. Mortimer decides that cleanliness can be ignored; the grime builds up on both Mortimer and his room. When Grandmother withholds her customary hug, Mortimer rethinks his neglect, cleans his room and takes a bath. A concise cumulative text is complemented by typically humorous Bianchi drawings. This is a quality collaboration of two talents who can coax children in a "do-right" tale without being didactic. A must purchase for pig lovers.

In *P. Bear's New Year's Party*, Paul Owen Lewis creates a counting book from P. Bear's guest list of best-dressed friends. Each double-page spread shows the time and a corresponding number of animals arriving for the party ("...at ten o'clock, a flock of geese..."). The black and white drawings include changes in the night sky which reflect the time. Splashes of red add highlights. The keen eye will watch for the patterns in the snow as the animals troop into the house. The climax comes as the clock strikes midnight. This is a delightful counting book which doubles as a lesson in telling time.



Thomas knew there were pirates living in the bathroom by Beth Parker is another in a long line of books where children blame imaginary characters for their own messes. The well-worn plot is saved by Renée Mansfield's energetic, lively illustrations. While Thomas tries to convince his parents of the pirates' presence, the pirates romp with toothpaste, toilet paper, and

mud – a challenge which Father finally tackles. But, as in *David's Father* by Robert Munsch, "Just wait!" – a sequel in the making, no doubt! A book worth purchasing for the facial expressions.

The last three books in this review are examples of mediocre books with few redeeming qualities and are not recommended for purchase.

The best peanut butter sandwich in the whole world is Bill McLean's first book, a cumulative tale which follows Billy through town as he gathers ingredients for his sandwich. The text suffers from wordy repetition, an all too predictable ending, and flat characterization. The use of a very textured paper somewhat softens the two dimensional figures in the illustrations.

In *Jane's loud mouth* by Rachna Gilmore, a little girl goes to bed without brushing her teeth so as to continue tasting gooey birthday party goodies. She

awakens the next morning to hear music pouring out of her mouth. A dentist solves the mystery of the music's source: a party of hundreds of tiny creatures is "nibbling at her teeth." The illustrations by Kimberly Hart have a loud mouth quality showing haggard adults and mad-cap creatures. But the text lacks coherence and the message on the importance of brushing teeth is overly simplified and blunt. The analogy between people who do not practice good dental hygiene and obnoxious (loud mouth) personalities seems inappropriate.

In *Binky Bemelman and the big city begonia*, a lonely city boy who lives on the 9,999th floor of an apartment building has nothing to do. His parents give him a begonia; it falls out the window and eventually finds its way into a flower show and wins first prize. Binky is confused about how it got there, but who wouldn't be? A peculiar tale which asks the reader to suspend belief to a ridiculous extent. The flat illustrations use bold colours, skewed perspectives and bizarre characters to a questionable advantage. A typographical error early in the text shows the lack of care taken to produce this book.

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UNE AVENTURE PLEINE DE SUSPENSE

Où sont passés les dinosaures? Sylvie Desrosiers. Illus. Daniel Sylvestre. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1990. 92 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-11903.

Quoi de plus mystérieux que les dinosaures? Ces créatures qui peuplèrent la terre pendant des millions d'années, éteintes pour des raisons inconnues. Rien ne reste aujourd'hui des géants d'autrefois – brontosaures, stégosaures, tyrannosaures, platéosaures et tricératops – sauf quelques os, parfois, un squelette conservé intact et de rares oeufs. Serait-il possible d'ailleurs de couvrir et faire éclore un oeuf de dinosaure? Dans *Où sont passés les dinosaures?* l'énigme des dinosaures, qui intriguent les scientifiques autant qu'ils font rêver les enfants, est doublée par l'aventure des trois "inséparables," Agnès, Jocelyne et John, aidés par leur fameux chien, Notdog.

Leur petit village, d'habitude si tranquille, vit des jours mouvementés. Non seulement un célèbre paléontologue a-t-il monté une exposition sur "Le sort des dinosaures", mais aussi la fête de l'Halloween approche. Justement Anne, petite Française de dix ans, secrètement amoureuse de John, arrive de Montréal pour la fête. Quel dommage que John la traite en bébé! Et quand on découvre, le lendemain de l'exposition, que l'oeuf de dinosaure a disparu, Anne partira seule avec Notdog à la recherche de l'oeuf perdu, voulant montrer à la bande d'amis ce dont elle est capable. Avant le dénouement de ce mystère, Anne et Notdog seront chloroformés par le voleur d'oeuf, déguisé en cheik