

MINI-REVIEWS

The time traveller book of New France. Morris Wernick. Durkin Hayes, 1990. 32 pp., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88627-263-6.

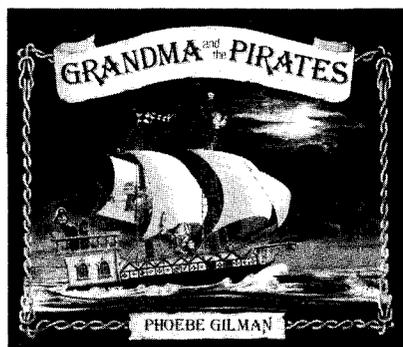
This addition to the "Time Traveller" series aims to make the early history of Canada accessible to elementary school children with a densely-illustrated format and brief textual explanations. History is seen through a broad range of fictional characters and settings typical of the period. The format is certainly attractive to children, but the history imparted is somewhat bland and oversimplified: though we hear about the fierceness of the Iroquois, for instance, we are not told about their savage treatment by Jacques Cartier. And one might want to encourage more awareness, even among elementary school children, of Quebec's current place in confederation than that given in the closing summary here.

Mary-Ann Stouck is an associate professor of English at Simon Fraser University where she teaches Medieval and Children's Literature. She has published articles on Middle English literature.

Grandma and the pirates. Phoebe Gilman. Illus. author. North Winds Press, 1990. 28 pp., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-73220-X.

Feisty Melissa and her noodle-cooking Grandma escape the clutches of the savage pirates when they finally stop trying to escape and instead trick the pirates to leave the ship – which the girl and the old woman then quietly sail away. It's a nice twist in a bouncy adventure tale full of fun and the sort of humour five-year-olds love (Oliver the parrot must be seasick: he looks a little green).

Phoebe Gilman not only knows a good story, she knows how to write it well and draw it superbly. The plot is put forward in simple, concise language but there are numerous embellishments, like the rhyme of the pirates as they catch the scent of noodle pudding and the chant (a great skipping song) describing the contents of Grandma's cupboard. The light, lively tone of the text is matched by the humour of the drawings. Fierce pirates sleep curled up with teddy bears and, when awake,



they raise their eyebrows half way up their foreheads in expressions of delighted nastiness. Grandma stands strong and proud on the book's front cover, rolling pin raised in salute.

One can appreciate the effort that has gone into making this book appear so effortless.

Kathleen Corrigan is a part-time editor who raises sheep and children on her farm near Owen Sound, Ontario.

Kids for sail. Pamela and Sam Bendall. Orca Book Publishers, 1990. 119 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-920501-49-4.

The authors, Pamela and Sam Bendall, are mother and son. Sam, his younger brother Charlie, and their parents sailed around the Pacific Ocean, Victoria to New Zealand, and *Kids for sail* is an account of their adventures.

It is a fine idea for a book, and there are occasional moments when the book works. The writing is a bit forced, though. In the midst of one of many storms, for example, Sam's Mom shouts "This is the greatest endurance test I have ever had." The line is somewhat typical of the writing style.

Kids for sail is also weak in story development. It tends to be a narration of events which uses few literary devices, such as foreshadowing, to mold the adventure into an emotional story. It also has its share of instructional moments when navigation and trade winds are taught to the reader.

Kids for sail is not a bad book. It is earnest and sincere but far from exciting.

Ken Roberts, currently Chief Librarian of the Whitby Public Library, is the author of several children's novels, including *Pop bottles and Hiccups* champion of the world (both Groundwood).