

is "A Duppy tale" told first to the teller by a grade-six Jamaican boy or "The magic cat" told to another teller by a Chinese friend in whose family it had a hundred-year history.

Following each story the teller is introduced to speak briefly in his or her own voice, describing the sources of the story and the ways in which it has been modified and personalized. These are not tales carefully preserved in folklorist's amber, but living gifts of a living art. There are no illustrations in this book, other than the one on the dust jacket, and just as the words create the narrative images for the inward eye, the voices transcend the limitations of the printed page to charm the inward ear.

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A BOOK TO BE TREASURED, ABOUT TREASURED BOOKS

The sleeper. David Day. Illus. Mark Entwisle, Doubleday, 1990. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-385-25253-6.



This unusual picture book is an original story set in ancient China; it contains motifs from the oral tradition of folklore, but its plot concerns the importance of books, and the preservation of a vital literary tradition. The "sleeper" of the title is an eager young monk, charmingly named Wu Wing Wong, who "found nothing more delightful than reading and being surrounded by books" in his monastery's library, the greatest in China.

Wu's problem, of oversleeping, eventually becomes an asset when he is sent to take the last and most precious volumes of the library to the wicked Emperor Chin, who secretly intends to destroy all written works. En route, a magical encounter in a cave with two old men playing chess results in Wu's oversleeping again – this time, by two hundred years! When he emerges from the cave, he finds all of China engaged in civil war over the imperial succession; the precious books which were preserved by Wu's long sleep in the cave contain the information needed to resolve the dispute and "Peace was restored at long last to all of China." Appointed Imperial Chief Librarian, Wu sees to it that "books were gathered from far-off lands, new books [are] written and – in time – the libraries [are]

filled up again." Its gently humorous treatment of Wu's problem and its tribute to the value of books make this tale particularly appealing. It is well written for reading aloud, with an easy, informal style and a generous sprinkling of questions to draw the reader or hearer in. The language is simple but always vivid, and Day establishes at once a rapport between narrator and reader which he maintains throughout. There is nothing stilted or remote about this tale, despite its setting of long ago and far away.

A similar freshness and immediacy characterizes the illustrations by Mark Entwisle. Water colour is effectively used to create an atmosphere in scenes involving distance, darkness and mystery, but the character and feelings of Wu are also well-suggested. While Entwisle uses few elements of traditional Oriental design, some of his pictures convey a powerful sense of the Chinese culture, and they are placed in an interestingly varied relationship with the text. These beautiful pictures accompany such a meaningful and well-told story that this book, like those from Wu's ancient library, is a treasure indeed, worthy to be preserved.

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UN TEXTE FORT INTELLIGENT

L'automne à 15 ans. José Fréchette. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1990. 152 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-120-7.

Expliquons d'abord le titre que vous venez de lire. Les joies de l'adolescence ne sont pas le propos du roman *L'automne à quinze ans*. Ce que j'appelle les joies de l'adolescence, c'est cette chance qu'ont les adolescents et les adolescentes d'aujourd'hui de voir des auteur-e-s de talent écrire des petits bijoux de romans, juste pour eux. Parce que *L'automne à quinze ans* est vraiment un bijou: tout, dans ce livre, est une réussite. Le style, l'intrigue, la justesse du ton, l'humour, et surtout, l'intelligence du texte.

L'automne à 15 ans paru dans la collection Roman Plus à La courte échelle est le premier roman jeunesse qu'écrit José Fréchette. La courte échelle est une maison d'édition qui fonctionne par commande. L'éditeur prend contact avec un-e auteur-e et lui propose de se lancer dans l'aventure de l'écriture pour la jeunesse. Cela provoque parfois de fort heureux résultats. *L'automne à 15 ans* en est un bel exemple.

L'action se déroule dans une ville qui pourrait être n'importe quelle ville moyenne, dans une école qui pourrait être n'importe quelle polyvalente. La narratrice de quinze ans aussi peut avoir l'air d'une adolescente ordinaire.