

children's nightmares to a befuddled creature who cannot find food for his dinosaur to a simpleton who is petulant about a forgotten birthday and loses his pet during a child's game. This transformation from adult to child is as incongruous as Ryan's development from distraught boy (annoyed rather than frightened of his nightmares) to the dominating partner of the friendship. One wonders if Morgan had a clear vision of his characters.

This lack of clarity extends to the writing which is devoid of memorable imagery and seldom shows affinity for the natural rhythm of language that so delights young children. The reader/listener is often lost amid half-hearted rhyme schemes and convoluted sentences, such as:

Ryan and the Giant searched all around. But the Dinosaur stayed in his hole in the ground, he didn't move or make a sound and there wasn't a clue where he might be.

In addition to misplaced punctuation, the internal rhyme scheme of those two sentences (around...ground...sound) is weak because it is not concluded in the final clause.

The illustrations add interest to the text. Painted often in moody colours, they are comforting but lack excitement. Not all are successful: the giant is no bigger than a tall man; the dinosaur, a large cuddly toy. A pity. The intended audience knows its dinosaurs well.

In addition, a few inconsistencies can be found. There is no bed for the giant in his cave and a dinosaur that feeds on organic garbage could not eat a tire. More troublesome is a scene in a movie theatre with patrons who are annoyed but not surprised to find a giant in their midst. Since adults play no part in the resolution of these tales, Morgan might have done better to have kept them out.

The stories are meant to be read aloud and come with three songs with scores for thumping out on an old classroom piano. They will certainly engage a child's attention, but a lack of crisp writing and solid character development make them a questionable choice for introducing children to the wonder of books.

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THE LOUD MAGIC OF MUNSCH AND MARTCHENKO

Show and tell. Robert Munsch. Illus. Michael Martchenko. Annick Press, 1991. Unpag., \$14.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-195-9, 1-55037-197-5.

Children and adults have come to expect chaos from this well-known author, but his latest piece of work takes absurdity to new heights. Young Benjamin decides his new baby sister will make a really neat idea for show-and-tell. She's asleep

when he puts her in his knapsack and trots off to school. Suddenly, the little girl starts to cry and the teacher opens the bag. To her horror, out pops a screaming baby. Efforts to console the child, using horrendous but hilarious methods, prove unsuccessful until she is back in her mother's arms.

The parent, teacher or adult reader must get past the total incompetence of each grown-up in the story—from the mother who isn't around to see her son off to school, to the doctor who is portrayed as a needle-happy, pill-dropping lunatic—to enjoy the author's sense of humour. Munsch's strength is his ability to use language kids appreciate. When the baby cries, she wails, "WAAA, WAAA, WAAA, WAAA, WAAA." Such exaggeration and repetition invariably generates an energetic response from his young listening audience, and holds their attention effortlessly. His technique also encourages (not to say forces) the reader to narrate with enthusiasm.

Martchenko's illustrations speak as loud as the words. They flow brilliantly with the text, barring one inconsistency. The crazy doctor pulls a very large needle from her black bag of surprises. When the baby sees the enormous object she is described as yelling as loud as she can. The corresponding picture fails to express what the onlooker expects. For the most part, his colourful artistic impressions reflect the ludicrousness of the situation.

Show and tell is set in large print and the watercolour pictures are bold enough for group use were the story to be read aloud.

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REDEFINING TRADITIONS: FRACTURING FAERIE TALES

Once upon a golden apple. Jean Little and Maggie de Vries. Illus. Phoebe Gilman. Viking, 1991. Unpag., \$16.95, cloth. ISBN 0-670-82963-3.



Richly layered in both text and illustrations, *Once upon a golden apple* is a fresh approach to the well-worn nursery rhymes, faerie tales, and nonsense verses that children have been weaned upon for centuries. The tale unfolds as two children listen to their father read them a book underneath an apple tree, a tree that magically seems to grow into a part of the story itself. A careful

look at the first illustration indicates that the father is reading the children the very book in which they themselves are painted, thus creating a *mise en abyme* effect, and adding to the credibility of the book as one which involves the