

of TTC, and the park and museum are the Royal Ontario Museum, but names have been withheld. Why?

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#### *BROWN BAG BLUES: A NEED FOR BALANCED LITERARY NUTRITION*

**Brown bag blues.** Linda Rogers and Rick Van Krugel. Illus. Rick Van Krugel. Studio 123, 1991. 47 pp., \$10.00 paper. ISBN 1-895302-06-4.

The battle against Victorian mores seems to have resulted in blatant concentration on sex by the media. Will the Van Krugels' tilting against physical-emotional repression of children result in blatant focus on boogers, belches, bowel movements and between-toes accumulations? If the TV cult cartoon "Ren and Stimpy" is any indication of entertainment fare for school-age children, it is a trend with which our authors here are definitely in touch.

Isn't vulgarity, like spice, better used in pinches to keep life from becoming prissy and bland? Why must great doses of crudeness constitute the healing measure?

Must we accept negative vulgarity, technological twaddle and pseudo-sociology as influences? Much of life can be tedious, indelicate, harsh. Somehow we learn to cope with less than pleasurable experiences. Yet, to concentrate on the shocking and gross, to exclude the fantasy, adventure and antic humour of high spirits is to deny children the development of subtlety, of finesse. Are children not capable of a variety of responses, acknowledging grossness and horror and moving on? In devoting so much time to this trivia, these artists neglect other more enriching experiences.

As to form, why are these and many other authors intent on setting children against learning rules of writing which have evolved in our language? Have we reached a sudden plateau, a place to rest on the way to Olympus, an experimental station to test the strength of these guidelines for expression? There is an attitude that spontaneity is stifled by knowledge of grammar, spelling, rhyming and rhythmic structure. Yes, test the holds but on with the ascent. Neglect of the structure which shapes poetry results in too much slack as in this book-tape production *Brown bag blues*.

Be wary of granting yourself or the young too easy a poetic license. Caution does not preclude patient acceptance of a child's fresh hopeful writing. With models of excellence the young will absorb and produce great things. Exposed to crass cartooning, undisciplined writing, unexceptional music and repeated grossness, they may develop into crass, undisciplined, unexceptional gross people.

It is a great challenge, privilege, and responsibility to write for the young, offering them a variety of ways to deal with reality. Yes, we all as children giggled ourselves into raptures over the little vulgarities that came our way. We also ran under rain-drenched trees, shaking the drops over ourselves and sat on back porches in the mysterious, cool summer dusk watching the swoops and listening to the calls of mosquito hawks.

The wondrous stories of Andersen stay in our minds even now. As the collective consciousness of children grows, children love the under-sea-song of the little mermaid because she longed, as they do, for the magic and beauty of new, unexpected, hopeful worlds.

On the tape are heard two quite good voices with an acceptably talented accompaniment. But the music lacks spark, becomes monotonous and the script of the verses is, for the most part, uninspired, often overdone.

This is low stuff, glibly done. Children deserve better.

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## LE CRI DU PÉLICAN

**Un hiver de tourmente.** Dominique Demers. Montréal, la courte échelle, 1992. 156 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-171-1.

Dominique Demers est actuellement critique de littérature de jeunesse au Devoir et reporter. Ses reportages lui ont valu plusieurs prix. Elle a écrit deux autres ouvrages pour la collection Premier Roman de la courte échelle: *Valentine Picotée* et *Toto la brute*. Le présent texte s'adresse aux adolescents/tes.

Le roman est localisé au Québec, à côté de Saint-Jovite et suit l'itinéraire de joies et de douleurs d'une adolescente au prénom enchanteur de Marie-Lune. Dans la vie de Marie-Lune, trois grands pôles d'attraction: sa mère Fernande, son amie Sylvie et son amoureux Antoine. Mais rien ne va plus; la mère a changé, elle est nerveuse, aigrie, et sa fille a grandi, elle est prête à découvrir l'amour et elle passe

