

unsuitable for life in Canada.”

Each book is accompanied by drawings and maps. Occasionally, the illustrations reveal an inconsistency with the text. For example, two maps in *Jane Franklin's obsession* purport to show the area of the Arctic charted by Sir John Franklin. But in the first map, showing the known Arctic before Franklin, King William Island (where Franklin was believed to have disappeared) is drawn as an island, and Berton has already noted that Franklin believed it to be a peninsula.

One drawing in *Parry of the Arctic* is a scene from a high-spirited theatrical performance held on board Parry's ship, the *Fury*. Berton has described the ship's isolation, a gloomy landscape without birds, animals or “cheerful natives.” Yet Inuit appear prominently in the drawing, gesticulating in bafflement at the Englishmen's on-stage antics.

Berton's ability to animate the past through his portrayal of strong, magnetic characters is, perhaps, his major trademark. Many of the books in the “Adventures in Canadian History” series succeed in this aim and will undoubtedly maintain the interest of young readers who would ordinarily never read history outside of the classroom.

But if these books are ever to be used as tools for learning, they need to focus more sharply on significant events in Canadian history. In addition, Berton should try to convey greater historical authenticity. Far more useful than the somewhat pretentious indices that accompany the short books would be a list of recommend readings for students.

Such a bibliographic resource would not only enable Berton's readers to pursue an interest that developed out of their reading, but would also allow students and teachers alike to examine what Berton calls his “unimpeachable,” though unnamed, historical sources.

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## COLOURFUL TALES DESERVE PERFECT DESIGN

**Follow that bus.** Susan Reid. Illus. C.L.A. MacKenzie. Orca Books, 1993. Unpag. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-920501-88-5; **Follow that hat.** Pierre Pratt. Trans. David Hamel. Annick Press, 1992. Unpag. \$15.95, \$5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-261-0, 1-55037-259-9.

Teachers are keenly aware of scarier issues beyond the indiscriminate media bashing and “edu-flavours of the month” from faceless bureaucrats ... I speak of the dreaded field-trip! However, anyone who has organized a tour will identify with Susan Reid's *Follow that bus* and the resourceful Mrs. Tardy's pursuit of her charges in progressively wilder and woollier vehicles of transport, ever one step behind.

Reid builds tension and laughs as C.L.A. MacKenzie's cartoony illustra-

tions keep the wackiness spinning steadily. While Reid weaves the classic repetitions any much-loved spoken tale should have, MacKenzie's wonky perspectives and wealth of witty visual detail distract delightfully (A park monument to a spokes ... frog?, a sardonic maritime shop sign reads "EB A. Ground, YACHTS"). All are drawn in a confident, fluid and exact line so that even the clothespin and laundry line pulley is dead on. The pastel hues are saved from "cuteseyness" by a clear light source with shadows to match and so the three-dimensional look is suggested in this not-so-nonsensical tale. Conrad School is wonderfully fortunate to have such a light-hearted gem as this, dedicated to them.

But even as illustrations support and augment the picture book, so must the design. A simple improvement for *Follow that bus* perhaps would be to render the hand-styled title letters larger, bolder and maybe with a thin outline to firmly establish the all-important cover on the bookshop shelves.

Almost directly opposite in colour treatment is Pierre Pratt's *Follow that hat* (*Leon sans son chapeau*, in French). Here we see richly deep and textural colours, yummily scrambled across black underpainting which remains in rough outlines to illustrate *le pauvre* Leon's pursuit of his hat. The story grows increasingly wilder and funnily fantastic ("*Faster*, he told the conductor of the Rapido-Expresso-Transcontinental-London-Santa Fe-Istanbul train") until it seems that Pratt's story runs off the word-play rails. In a miscalculated Brechtian move, Pratt lapses into rhetorical questions and asides which only distract and puzzle in either translation. Nevertheless, Leon comes full circle through a world of tiny-headed, square-bodied, and long-armed people, as he reclaims *son chapeau* only to ... you guessed it, see its twin soar off into the blustery sky over angled row housing and streaming hair!

Design falters again when black type is poorly placed on dark ultramarine or cobalt blues. It's simply too hard to read. Although a pity Pratt's feast of colour and craziness is slightly diminished by this weakness, the book celebrates a stimulating and lusciously-hued land of his happy creation.

**Robin Baird Lewis** is an illustrator and art teacher. Her seventh title, *To the Post Office with Mama*, will be published by Annick Press in the spring of 1994.

## TWO WINNERS FROM PETER CUMMING

**A horse called Farmer.** Peter Cumming. Illus. P. John Burden. Ragweed Press, 1984. 37 pp., ISBN 0-920304-34-6; **Out on the ice in the middle of the bay.** Peter Cumming. Illus. Alice Priestley. Annick Press, 1993. 32 pp., \$15.95, \$5.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-276-9, 1-55037-277-7.

Peter Cumming's *A horse called Farmer* won the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia first prize for children's fiction in 1980, was first published by Ragweed