

FIRST NOVELS FOR KIDS

That's enough Maddie! Louise Leblanc. Illus. Marie-Louise Gay. Trans. Sarah Cummins Formac Publishing, 1991. 57 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88780-090-4; **Maddie in goal.** Louise Leblanc. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac Publishing, 1992. 60 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88780-202-8; **Swank talk.** Bertrand Gauthier. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac Publishing, 1992. 57 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88780-208-7; **Mooch and me.** Gilles Gauthier. Illus. Pierre-Andrée Derome. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac Publishing, 1991. 60 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88780-096-3; **Hang on, Mooch!** Gilles Gauthier. Trans. Sarah Cummins. Formac Publishing, 1992. 60 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88780-204-4.

Gilles Gauthier Translated by Sarah Cummins

Mooch and Me



Formac First Novel

This new Canadian novel series by Formac Publishing is fresh and unique. Printed in bold type, the novels are easy to read and especially helpful in establishing the left-to-right reading pattern.

The novels are also non-threatening to the new reader, telling refreshing stories from a child's point of view. Although they are similar in size to a more adult novel, the format is short sentences, large print, brief chapters and hilarious black-and-white pictures. The concept of chapters appeals to children just beginning to read and gives them a sense of accomplishment in completing independently any one of the works.

Aimed at five- to eight-year-olds, these novels can also bridge a potentially difficult situation. The child can read about a problem not unlike her own. For instance, *Mooch and me* by Gilles Gauthier deals with a sensitive young boy and his aging dog. Carl is from a single parent family and he is dealing with problems at school. His best friend is Mooch, a nine-year-old dog—Mooch is old, deaf, mostly blind and tends to get into all kinds of trouble, but Carl thinks he's the best dog that ever was. In *Hang on, Mooch!*, another Gilles Gauthier novel, we are again treated to the escapades of Mooch. This time Mooch has outdone himself and lands in the dog pound. This is a well-developed and sensitive story.

That's enough, Maddie! by Louise Leblanc deals with a little girl whose whole family is getting on her nerves. What is she to do? Maddie decides the best course of action is to run away and she makes plans accordingly. But she fails to realize her plans could back-fire. The story ends with an unexpected twist in

Louise Leblanc Translated by Sarah Cummins

That's Enough, Maddie!



Formac First Novel

the plot, opening the door for future discussion between child and parent or teacher.

In *Maddie in goal*, also by Louise Leblanc, the protagonist is told that "Girl's can't be goalies!" At least this is the message Maddie gets from her family—all except Grandma. Grandma encourages Maddie to be whatever she wants to be and to try her best. *Maddie in goal* shows us the special relationship a little girl and her grandmother can have. Maddie works hard at achieving her goal of being a goalie, but she also finds out that sometimes when you get what you most desire, in the end the cost may be too great.

Swank talk by Bertrand Gauthier portrays the unique closeness of twins. The parents discover they are unable to understand what their twins are saying and thus seek professional help. The younger beginning reader may become easily frustrated with parts of this novel, especially where the twins are having a conversation in "their" language. The vowels are interchanged, making the flow of reading difficult. Near the end of the book, the twins reveal how they are able to Swank Talk. More mature reader may take this vowel changing idea one step further and try their hand at creating secret messages.

Overall, the books in this First Novel series by Formac are new, interesting and funny. They offer an easy bridge from bright picture books to full-length novels.

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ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS FOR CHILDREN

Sky—all about planets, stars, galaxies, eclipses and more. David Allen. Illus. Ron Galimam. Greey de Pencier/Books from OWL, 1993. 32 pp., \$5.95 paper; ISBN 1-895688-04-3. **Earth—all about earthquakes, volcanoes, glaciers, oceans and more.** Carol Allen. Illus. David Pearson. Greey de Pencier/Books from OWL, 1993. 32 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-895688-06-X; **Air—all about cyclones, rainbows, clouds, ozone and more.** David Allen. Illus Gordon Bain. Greey de Pencier/Books from OWL, 1993. 32 pp., \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-895688-08-6; **The nature book—animals, people, plants, and the earth we all share.** Sylvia Funston. Illus Daniel Sylvestre. Greey de Pencier/Books from OWL, 1991. 48 pp., \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-920775-66-7.

The series of books, *Sky*, *Earth* and *Air*, is directed at the eight-to-twelve age group. The information is presented in a language that is age-appropriate but can also be enjoyed by younger children with parental assistance. These authors excel in the use of simple examples, analogies, and fun activities. Throughout are colourful comic-book style illustrations and diagrams with clear handwritten captions and explanations. These serve to demonstrate concepts, explain the activities, or simply enhance the text. An excellent feature is the printing of terminology relating to the subject under discussion in boldface style with the definitions incorporated into the text. The authors do not fall prey to oversimplification but rather use this method to help expand the reader's vocabulary.