

its surprise ending—adds a quality of mystery to the story. The book explains the meaning of unions and labour disputes to young children in a language that they could understand. It does not preach and does not judge. The illustrations, with their warm use of colour, flowing lines and portrayal of expressive faces, add a new dimension to the text. While there is enough text on each page to be read by a young child, the vocabulary suggests that it would be more useful for a parent to read it to the child first and answer his/her questions. The concepts are too difficult for a young child to grasp immediately.

In general, all these books make an excellent attempt to treat difficult emotional issues affecting children's lives today. They are written in a sensitive, delicate, engaging and non-judgmental manner, and so belong on the shelves of children's homes and libraries.

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#### BRINGING UP BEAUTY: BRINGING UP ALL THE ISSUES CONFRONTING TODAY'S ADOLESCENT.

**Bringing Up Beauty.** Sylvia McNicoll. Maxwell MacMillan Canada, 1994. 204 pages, \$14.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-02-954256-1), ISBN 0-02-954257-X.

What appears at the outset to be a comic novel involving a twelve-year-old girl raising a black lab puppy for Canine Vision Canada quickly evolves into an account of the pressures adolescents encounter growing up today. In *Bringing Up Beauty*, Sylvia McNicoll quickly abandons the promise of a canine/adolescent adventure in favour of illustrating the abundant troubles of the nineties pre-teen.

Initially, characterization in *Bringing Up Beauty* is vivid and the comic potential of McNicoll's figures is great. Elizabeth humorously narrates her experiences raising Beauty. A computer-geek father, an older sister who dresses only in black and an environmentally-obsessed mother have initial appeal, but quickly disintegrate into flat stereotypical figures. Elizabeth's mother becomes particularly problematic: the "super-mom of the nineties" stereotype, she can work in and outside the home, hold the family together throughout adversity, volunteer to foster a puppy and clean up the environment single-handedly. But she is a martyr, one who "snaps and snarls" and cannot find time to add Elizabeth to her list of "things to do." Beauty, the black lab puppy, is adorable and McNicoll could have developed her character further—which would have been in keeping with the title. Secondary figures are flat and description of a "catty" clique of girls makes me despair that

adolescent behaviours will never change.

McNicol's tale wanders from the child-raising-dog story to that of the complicated life of a pre-teen. Themes abound: parent-sibling tension; sibling rivalry; parental expectations; illegal substances; parental unemployment; resulting parental apathy (re: self and child); adolescent peer pressure; and boy-girl relationships, just to name a few. The number of problems Elizabeth encounters overwhelms the reader.

To her credit, McNicol strives to make her novel current by including such trends as rollerblading and virtual reality video games. However, her heroine's favourite outfit—black leather pants, a purple silk shirt and suede boots—dates her character, as does Elizabeth's humming of the song "I'm too sexy for my shirt . . ." This heroine stems from 1990! Always fashion-conscious, some teens might consider Elizabeth out-of-date. McNicol's reference to nineties issues like environmentalism and video game violence is pedantic in tone. Children already hear the "recycle that!" message at school and video violence is being stressed continually.

*Bringing Up Beauty* attempts to address the many issues associated with growing up. Readers who expect an entertaining tale involving a child and dog can steady themselves for the burdens of pre-teen life.

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## UN PARIS STÉRÉOTYPÉ

**Sophie part en voyage.** Louise Leblanc. Illus. Marie-Louise Gay. Montréal, la courte échelle, 1993 (Collection Premier Roman 31). 64 pp., 7,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-195-9.

Vêtue d'un imper rose et blanc, bardée de sacs, de lunettes de soleil, de papiers et de crayon, avec deux valises dont une est mal fermée, telle nous apparaît Sophie sur la page de couverture du quatrième roman dont elle est l'héroïne et dans l'escalator qui l'emmène loin de ses parents. En un mot, elle part pour Paris!

Sa vision de la capitale française déçoit un peu. Suite de clichés (Notre-Dame, le Louvre, La Tour Eiffel, la colonne de la Bastille), d'anachronismes comme le "béret" de Papi, le "canari" ou punch de Mamie, et de déjà vu tels les croissants et confitures dont les Québécois se font une spécialité dans leur propre Province.

