

Mini-Reviews

The Twelve Tales of Christmas. Margot Sexton. Illus. Janis Jones. Borealis Press, 1994. 54 pp. \$25.95 paper. ISBN 0-88887-135-X.

The Twelve Tales of Christmas is a collection of short Christmas stories aimed at readers from seven to ten years old. The stories are amusing, short, and the vocabulary age appropriate.

Sexton has taken some old stories and given them a new touch. "A gift of worth" tells of young Michael who desperately wants to help his Grandmother—especially by shovelling the snow from her driveway—but who always arrives too late. He finds the perfect Christmas gift for her, but cannot afford it without making a sacrifice. These stories have a message: that Christmas is more than just presents, the tree, lights and singing from "The little bear who found Christmas." However, at one point Santa and Father Time have a fireside chat over a glass of brandy, perhaps not the most appropriate image for this age of reader.

The illustrations are bright and the format of the book is eye-catching—on the first page of every story the title appears in big, bold print with the text of the story on the left side of the page and an accompanying illustration on the right. On the whole, *The Twelve Tales of Christmas* is a light, fun book, sure to bring a smile to the reader, and invite discussion concerning the content.

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Grandpa. Debbie Bailey. Photos Susan Huszar. Annick Press, 1994 (Talk-about books). Unpag. \$4.95 board. ISBN 1-55037-967-4. *Grandma*. Debbie Bailey. Photos Susan Huszar. Annick Press, 1994 (Talk-about books). Unpag. \$4.95 board. ISBN 1-55037-966-6.

For some people, *Grandma* and *Grandpa* may hold a lot of appeal. For this reader, however, these board books fall short of their potential to be consistently interesting.

To their credit, the photos in *Grandpa* and *Grandma* are rich in cultural diversity. This aspect of the pictures offers children and adults alike a chance to explore their connectedness to others through their shared affection for a grandparent. The inclusion of a grandfather in a wheelchair has a similar unifying effect.

Nowhere in these books are the familial bonds better expressed than in the cover photos. These are truly compelling. Unfortunately, many of the other pictures do not have the same award-winning quality. This makes the viewing experience reminiscent of looking through a family photo album where you do not know the subjects: an activity which can be quite dull unless the pictures are outstanding. *Grandma* and *Grandpa* would be more stimulating if all of the photos were memorable.