as George Herbert's "Love bade me welcome..." seem included more for mom and dad, although they cannot hurt and may well help.

Pilling's style adopts a middle way between King James traditionalism and prosaic modernism. Denton's watercolour illustrations enhance the narratives without overwhelming them. The editorial viewpoint is traditional and Christian, with emphasis on giving children a positive and formative introduction to the Bible.

By contrast, Boritzer's book indicates even in the title (*What is God?* rather than *Who is God?*) that it will treat God as impersonal, not personal. Its approach is modernistic in that it begins with a question and looks at a number of answers, including the possibility that no answer exists. It also shows a self-conscious awareness of multiculturalism, peace, and brotherhood, and prefers warm fuzzies to awkward facts about human nature (cf. *Sesame Street*).

Boritzer attempts an overview of the religious question, and gives a survey of various responses to it, Eastern and Western. Even on the factual level there is some room for carping about his accuracy.

Boritzer's survey includes an apparent slap at personal religion as picturing "an old man...in the clouds." Concluding his survey, the author presents the *real* answer to his question: "There are many ways to talk about God. Does that mean that everything that everybody ever says about God is right? Does that mean that God is everything? Yes! God is everything great and small!"

The illustrations by Robbie Marantz are effectively expressionistic, and would probably carry the narrative for younger readers.

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'TWEEN-AGE TREATS

Morris Rumpel and the wings of Icarus. Betty Waterton. Groundwood Books, 1989. 108 pp., $5.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-099-5; **The tiger catcher's kid**. Sylvia McNicoll. Nelson Canada, 1989. 111 pp., paper. ISBN 0-17-602592-8

According to the prolific American children's author Lee Wyndham, 'tween-age children (aged 8 to 12) comprise the biggest reading group, the "Golden Age" of reading. The interests of boys and girls at this stage are limitless. Here are two books which embody some of those interests – mystery, adventure, animals, humour – presented with vast differences in plot, technique, insight, and style.

Morris Rumpel and the wings of Icarus is one of Betty Waterton's series about the unpredictable antics and adventures of the Rumpel family. The pre-

sent novel, warmly engaging though told in the formulaic style of junior detective stories, manages to avoid the predictable plots and saccharine characterization of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew. Morris is likeable, funny, and human, though his penchant for eating does remind one suspiciously of Chet Morton.

As exuberant, irrepressible Morris prepares to visit his grandparents' ranch outside the sleepy little town of Cranberry Corners, we are treated to the boisterous banter and competitive sibling rambunctiousness of hectic but happy family life. Then, with his haircut, his backpack and his pudding for Grandpa, amid sniffles from Mom and greenbacks from Dad, Morris boards the plane. He is in for more than a quick flick to Cranberry Corners: his boyish chatter provides vital information to the man-in-the-black-leather-coat sitting in front of him, who of course turns out to be Icicle Eyes, villain of the story, on a mission of stealing and selling the rare peregrine falcons that nest near Rumpel Ranch.

Grandpa, a nostalgic war-time pilot, gets his secret project, a hang-glider, airborne. It's up to Icarus's wings and Morris's daring to abort the poachers' attempts and save the fledgling falcons from Icicle Eyes and the certain indignities of the Baghdad bazaar.

Little details are woven into the story, about peregrines and hang-gliders, horseback riding, bake-sales and barber-shops. The Rumpels are believable and Grandpa's struggle with his diet is at least timely. There are no personal conflicts to resolve, no emotional barriers to overcome, but as juvenile mystery, this tightly-written book succeeds fairly well.

On the other hand, *The tiger catcher's kid* can catch you by surprise. Apparently a typical contemporary story about a typical contemporary kid whose major problem seems to be keeping a grip on her slippery pet hamster, this run-of-the mill cutesy story develops elements of offbeat humour and pathos and a strange authenticity.

Erin, an only child with a harried, busy Mom and a Dad whose job she's at variance with (he's an Animal Control Officer), buys her pet hamster vitamins, feeds him and cleans his cage excessively, and is so scared of his getting a cold she air-controls his quarters with her vaporizer. Though obviously written at the high-interest, low-reading level, the book is surprisingly insightful. Erin's problems with peer pressure, her ambivalence towards her parents, and her handling of her pet, all offer revealing glimpses of a shrewd, resourceful and very caring personality.

The short sentences, fast-paced action and frenetic dialogue, complete with lack of descriptions (the illustrations provide the "scenery"), can be a little dizzying to the reader desiring more depth, substance or, at the very least, breathing space. But *The tiger catcher's kid* is more realistic than *Morris Rumpel and the wings of Icarus* in that it deals with human conflict and behaviour.

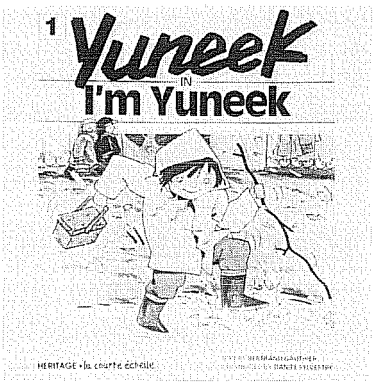
And her mother, busy as she is, becomes more aware of Erin's emotional needs.

For the general 'tween-age audience, this story is engaging. Every kid wants a sibling. Every kid wants a pet. And every kid has something about his/her parents he/she doesn't like. More specifically, for the child with a possible reading difficulty (and there are, sadly, a lot of them for whom to read a complete novel can be a prideful accomplishment), this well-crafted, well-plotted little book makes an excellent choice.

Geraldine Ryan-Lush *is a writer and substitute teacher living in Mt. Pearl, Nfld. She has published articles, short stories and book reviews, and her first children's book,* Jeremy Jeckles hates freckles *is on the 1991 publication schedule of Breakwater Books.*

CELEBRATING THE UNIQUE

Yuneek in I'm Yuneek. Bertrand Gauthier. Illus. Daniel Sylvestre. English version David Homel. La courte échelle, 1984. Unpag., paper. ISBN 2-7625-5170-6; **Yuneek in The championship**. 1986. ISBN 2-7625-5171-4; **Yuneek in The winner**. 1987. ISBN 2-7625-5172-2; **Yuneek in The present**. 1987. ISBN 2-7625-5173-0; **Yuneek in The Wawabongbong** 1989. ISBN 2-7625-6308-9; **Yuneek in Camping out**. 1989. ISBN 2-7625-6307-0.



There is a charming pun in this title character's name. As a contemporary, five-year-old, apartment-dwelling, urban Canadian child, Yuneek lives a fairly ordinary life. He likes Helen, his father's sleepover friend and learns to get along with her daughter, Andrea; he helps with the chores; he plays hard on a boy/girl hockey team (*The championship*); he struggles with jealousy for his father's attention (*The winner*) and with anger when he is thwarted over his eating preferences, and deals with having two loving parents who live far apart (*The present*); he longs for the newest electronic toy, gets lost while shopping (*The Wawabongbong*), enjoys a first tenting trip (*Camping out*), and generally knows the everyday worries and delights familiar to young readers who share his developmental tasks and trials. All in all, Yuneek is depicted as a pretty normal boy, albeit one fortunate enough to have his ideas, feelings, and needs respected and appreciated.