had happened to her a generation before happening again, to Andrea, now, in the present.

The fact that Andrea's romantic attachments, such as they are, with Calvin, the gaffer, and Marc, Justine's brother, are much more innocent than Doris's with Jackie's long gone father, Pierre Belanger, is testament to Mowat's light-handed and engaging treatment of the life of a fifteen-year-old. Here is none of the grittiness of the S.E. Hinton school of teenage angst, of the later Judy Blume, or the earlier Kevin Major. There's no need for that in a book that captures well the elements of the life of a typical mid-teen who is gradually learning about life and herself, and which wants to make its points about history and its impact on the present, and about connectedness at the personal and the national levels.

Through the course of the Andrea books, Andrea has been getting older. We follow her progress as we follow the progress of Marianne Brandis's Emma in the Emma trilogy. Will there be another book chronicling the further adventures of Andrea Baxter? I, for one, hope so, and look forward to it.

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Writing Historical Fiction

The Brideship. Joan Weir. Stoddart Kids, 1988. 218 pp. $6.99. ISBN 0-7736-74748. ***The Accidental Orphan***. Constance Horne. Sandcastle Books, 1998. 135 pp. $8.95. ISBN 1-888-551-6655.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in children's literature is how to write historical fiction for a young audience. How can an author bring another time to life and make it relevant to an audience reared on the Spice Girls? The author has a responsibility to the audience to make history lively, and a responsibility to history to be accurate.

Both *The Brideship* by Joan Weir and *The Accidental Orphan* by Constance Horne illustrate unusual aspects of Canadian history. They tell young audiences what their history teachers will not: that a significant number of emigrants to Canada did not particularly want to leave home. In *The Brideship*, Sarah is one of many British orphans chosen to be brides for miners in British Columbia; the girls do not know of their fate until they are on the boat. In *The Accidental Orphan*, Ellen runs onto a docked ship when she is accused of theft, and the ship takes off for Canada. She is placed on a

family farm in Manitoba. Of the two books, *The Accidental Orphan* is the most historically accurate, although neither book is artistically satisfying.

The Brideship has a promising start, when Sarah, her cousin Maude, and the other orphans are held captive in one room of the ship, rarely able to leave, and hardly given enough to eat. This part of the book will keep children captive themselves. However, once the girls reach Canada, the story loses momentum completely. Sarah and her friend Lizzie give their future husbands the slip and go up the coast to a mining town, where they have two rather unconvincing romances. Suddenly Sarah loses all of her desire for independence that made her an interesting character at the beginning. The plot turns creakily on revenge as well as romance, as the girls seek to reveal the cruelties of the minister who brought them over. Sainted cousin Maude, who died on the ship, warned her against Lizzie, but this turns out to be a red herring for the reader. However, it seems counter-intuitive, since dying sainted cousins in the nineteenth century tended to be right about such things.

The descriptions of the ship and of the mining town seem historically accurate, but there are certain slips in fact, attitude and language that make the book ultimately unconvincing as historical fiction. The governesses and nannies travel West because they have been usurped by "graduates of the newly opened Secondary Schools for Women." This gives the impression that female education was more developed than it was; furthermore, the idea of a nanny being thus displaced is inaccurate, as nannies were not middle-class women, and these schools were only affordable to the middle class. Also, the phrase "high school graduate" was not in existence in 1862. When Maude dies, the narrator writes: "It was funny — until that moment Sarah had never realized that young people could die." Both the language and the sentiment are foreign to the nineteenth century. In a time when infant and child mortality were high, it would have been unusual for Sarah not to have encountered death at an early age. Later in the text, Josh the missionary describes how Lizzie has cheered him up: "She said to stop worrying about all the things I wasn't, and to just go ahead and be myself." Nothing could sound more modern.

The Accidental Orphan by Constance Horne has fewer moments that jar the reader. This story will interest girls who are currently reading *Little House on the Prairie*. Like Sarah, Ellen finds herself with a group of orphans on a boat headed for Canada. The children do not know what awaits them, only that they are intended to work on farms. The journey is over soon, and the bulk of the book takes place in Manitoba. Horne shows us the historical details of life on the farm in the late nineteenth century, such as how to clean rugs with snow. Ellen is a likeable character, but not a highly developed one. Perhaps her circumstances are simply too fortuitous for the reader to feel much for her: the family she finds herself with treats her as one of their own from day one. Although we do see the harsh treatment of one of the orphans, Ellen's situation seems far too lucky. We get little sense of the extreme cul-

tural isolation and maltreatment of the British orphans. Ellen's homesickness never hits home, and her frustrations seem "tacked on" after her kind reception.

Young girls will enjoy these books, but there remains much more to be said about teenage pioneers. I hope other young adult writers will take up the challenge.

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Growing Up in an Earlier Canada

The Doctor's Apprentice. Ann Walsh. Beach Holme, 1998. 150 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88878-389-2. ***The Shacklands*** Judi Coburn. Second Story, 1998. 287 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-896764-13-4.

Maturing into the adult world poses many difficulties for contemporary young people. These two lively new historical novels show some of these difficulties in a rather different context, as faced by young Canadians in the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Both novels affirm the resilient spirit and courage of their leading characters, and emphasize the possibilities available to them in a rapidly-changing land. *The Doctor's Apprentice* is set during the Gold Rush in Barkerville, BC, in 1868; *The Shacklands* takes place in Toronto between 1908 and 1910. Although the difference in the nature of the two communities is almost as great as their geographical distance from each other, both novels show their young characters facing similar challenges: resisting family pressures regarding their future careers, reacting to addiction and other problematic behaviour in the people around them, and facing their own dark memories and anxieties about the future.

The two novels are, however, very different in tone and focus. Walsh's, a sequel to her *Moses, Me and Murder*, is essentially an adventure story and climaxes with a ghostly visitation during the great Barkerville fire. Its humour, plot and sketchy characterizations are aimed at younger adolescents. Coburn's novel, considerably longer and more complex in its cast of characters and presentation of social issues, has no dramatic climax and no real resolution. Rather, it reflects the ongoing encounter of its heroine with the decisions and conflicting loyalties presented by everyday life. While both novels make effective use of their period settings, involving the reader in the social environment, Coburn's does so in far greater depth.