engaging unquestioningly with one of the nadirs of mass culture (professional sports)? And do we really want to teach children that adventure is devoid of family context (not to say that it can't be)?

No doubt some readers will answer these questions in the affirmative and these books belong on their shelves. More cynical readers will want to avoid these books out of the basic principle that children, if they are to develop in ways that give them some basic tools to fend off the intrusions of marketing culture (and the dull mind-clutter it produces), would do well to read authors and books that make some small effort to produce a fantasy world that does not rely on tiresome clichés ("Boys, after all, will be boys!"). (For instance, Peter Sís's wonderful book on his father's adventure in Tibet and the adventure of his discovery of the story itself, *Tibet Through the Red Box*, evokes a welter of qualitatively superior visual and literary resonances that make the Matthew books read like the backs of cereal boxes.) This is not to say that clichés themselves cannot be useful. A group of children to whom I read these stories on several occasions anticipated most of the moves made by Morgan, and moved on to parodying and inverting them with no small delight. Matthew's cheesy smile when caught by his mother listening to a baseball game while wearing a baseball cap in a bed surrounded by the detritus of fandom (a scene aptly caught by illustrator Michael Martchenko) inspired a canny routine on bad faith, disobedience, and the conventions associated with both.

Children are wildly more inventive and subversive than Morgan would have them be. The Matthew books envisage the imaginatively sterile world of suburban middle-America (though clearly depicted as occurring in Toronto via the visual stratagem of the CN Tower, itself a troubling enough feature of this "Canadian" book), in which affluence, technology, banality, and mass culture reign, even in children's (read boys') predictable fantasies.

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The Immigrant and a Sense of Belonging

The Boy in the Attic. Paul Yee. Illus. Gu Xiong. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1998. Unpag. $15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-330-7. ***The Red Corduroy Shirt***. Joseph Kertes. Illus. Peter Perko. Stoddart, 1998. 32 pp. $12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-30664. ***A Gift for Gita***. Rachna Gilmore. Illus. Alice Priestley. Second Story, 1998. Unpag. $12.95 cloth, $5.95 paper. ISBN 1-896764-12-6.

The immigrant experience is featured in all of these books. Young readers will gain valuable experience about the world around them and will see how young immigrant children deal with change, friendship, family loyalty, and cultural differences.

Change is difficult for everyone, not just children. However, children often have to take changes, decided by others, in stride. In two of these stories, *A Gift for Gita* and *The Boy in the Attic*, the young protagonists have just adjusted to their new country, Canada, and have made a good friend when they are faced with moving away.

For Gita, her new world stability is challenged when her father considers a new job which will take the family back to their native India. The move does not take place because her parents cannot face such a change since they too have become attached to Canada and their new life. Her grandmother's grace and wisdom help Gita understand that even for older people, leaving friends and a familiar way of life is difficult. As well, Grandmother explains to her the gift of memories we take with us through life, represented by some beautiful nesting dolls which represent Gita's grandmother's insights.

The Boy in the Attic is a ghost story that will appeal to children who have an imaginary friend. Kai-ming, who has recently arrived in Canada, finds a magical friend, Benjamin, in the attic of his first Canadian home. Whereas Gita received dolls from her grandmother, Kai-ming has a magical black butterfly, sent by his deceased ancestors. It is due to the butterfly's presence that Kai-ming is able to communicate with the ghost who does not speak Chinese. They establish a warm relationship without parental interference, unlike the two immigrant boys in *The Red Corduroy Shirt* This story has death and abandonment as subliminal themes. When Kai-ming must move, he feels hurt and betrayed by Benjamin who refuses to come with Kai-ming to his new house. Kai-ming comes to understand that the gift of friendship can be kept alive through memory, just as Gita did. He too gives a gift, the black butterfly, to Benjamin, as a reminder of their summer together. This gesture indicates his acceptance of his situation and ends the story on a positive note.

These two books will appeal mostly to children between the ages of four and nine. In *A Gift for Gita* the family discussion shows respect for all family members. The story is also consistent in the development of all the characters from Gilmore's previous Gita books, that will satisfy her audience. The intergenerational aspects of the Gita stories are very instructional to children who do not have older adults in their lives.

On the other hand, the adults in Yee's story seem distant and glaringly absent. At the beginning of the story they seem to take an active role in connecting Kai-ming to his dead grandparents. However, with the introduction of the black butterfly (the spirit of these dead ancestors), the parents fade into the background. The absence of Kai-ming's parents sends a negative message to young readers as does the idea that Benjamin's mother punished

him in a manner that turned out to be fatal for him.

The third story, *The Red Corduroy Shirt*, is aimed at a slightly older audience. There are some pictures accompanying the story (which is more complex), and the adults play a greater role in the action. Friendship is clearly the main theme here and like the other books the friendship involves children of different races and cultural backgrounds. In this story, however, both children are immigrants. Jake, through whose eyes we view the action, is clearly enamoured by his classmate's exotic home, family and customs. He is prevented from keeping Jerry's beautiful red corduroy shirt due to his mother's stereotypic bias, which is silently but clearly communicated. The relationships here deal with generational issues, family loyalty, as well as with friendship. The story ends on a note of compromise. Readers will encounter the cultural biases and differences we all confront daily in a multicultural society. This story, partly autobiographical, rings true.

The artwork in each of these books adds an essential element to the success of the stories. The drawings by Alice Priestley are not only beautiful framed pictures, but also clearly illustrate the love shared among family members. She gives life to the emotions expressed in the story. Gu Xiong's strong illustrations of Yee's story continue a tradition of beautiful looking books for Paul Yee's work. They make the story believable, although one drawing has a significant mistake in it: young hockey players are wearing ice skates to play street hockey in midsummer warm weather, something the truly observant young reader will notice. The large-size book has full-page drawings. Peter Perko's illustrations are simple pictures of times gone by, the 1950s. The old fashioned quality of them brings the story alive. The small size of the book and its beautiful dust jacket illustration invite the young reader to pick up the book.

Young readers will find relevant human experiences in these books — family relationships, the importance of friendship, and dealing with change and new cultures.

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Sacred Journey

Spirit Quest. Diane Silvey. Illus. Joe Silvey. Beach Holme, 1997. 58 pp. $8.95. ISBN 0-88878-376-0.