

structurally ambitious than Waboose's book and is appropriate for slightly younger readers (four to seven). Abigail's winter camping trip with her father and brother leads to her adventure with a fawn trapped by fishing line wrapped around its legs. Abigail plays an heroic role in setting the fawn free, her intervention partially making up for the human carelessness which trapped the fawn in the first place. An urban visitor to the spectacular winter bush, Abigail takes pictures to show to her mother who stayed behind in the city. Wallace emphasizes the importance of relating this unique experience to those not fortunate enough to witness it, whereas Waboose highlights the solitude and privacy of Noshen's experiences. Similarly, the noise of Abigail and her brother Eugene contrasts with the silence of Noshen, while the separation of Wallace's children from the natural world and the animals, as seen in the spectacular illustration of the deer leaping to freedom, contrasts with the union and harmony conveyed in Waboose's book. Less reverent than Noshen, Abigail enthusiastically celebrates her exposure to unusual scenes which will not come her way again for some time.

For the urban child, the journey is an adventure to be photographed and talked about as an unusual foray into a harsh, but beautiful landscape and season. For the rural Ojibway child, the journey is an initiation into a landscape much closer to home. Both children undergo a profound change, reaping the benefits of an older generation determined to pass on skills and values associated with the natural world. The reader reaps the benefits as well, perhaps responding more powerfully to Noshen's awe and reverence than to Abigail's excitement and curiosity, but recognizing the importance of the passage of the seasons and of the passage of the child through these seasons.

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A Boy's Hands and Men's Stones

The Stoneboat. Teddy Jam. Illus. Ange Zhang. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1999. Unpag. \$15.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-368-4.

The Stoneboat, by the writer/illustrator team of Teddy Jam and Ange Zhang, skillfully evokes the depths of a boy's fears, his courageous desire to see justice enacted, and his simple, instinctive way of knowing people share a common need for another person's hand — to lift, to help, to share, and ultimately, to hold while walking life's stony path.

Jam's use of concrete images to evoke theme is matched by Zhang's use of light and shadow, close-ups, and distortion to create focus. For example, Jam uses tools such as a pitchfork, a stoneboat, and a fishing rod to show how Mr. Richard — a large, wealthy, rural loanshark — and the narrator — a skinny, poor, vulnerable boy — are first tenuously and, finally, lastingly connected by their shared experience. When Mr. Richard falls into fast-moving water while spearfishing, he holds



*Illustration from The
Stoneboat*

out his pitchfork, “handle first,” so that the boy and his brother can safely pull him ashore. Zhang’s illustration shows Mr. Richard almost entirely submerged, eyes closed, blood gushing from his forehead, hands outstretched. In contrast to Zhang’s other illustrations, where Mr. Richard’s enormous size is exaggerated to fit the boy’s perception of his stature in the community, Mr. Richard’s vulnerability here becomes the central focus. For a moment, the pitchfork connects the rich man with the poor boys, but then Mr. Richard slips his hat over his wound, and dismisses them with no sign of gratitude.

The boy retains hope, though, that his heroic action might cause Mr. Richard to forgive the large debt his father owes him. Jam makes the “stoneboat,” a tool Mr. Richard uses to remove stones from his field, a crucial meeting place for the two characters. As the boy considers Mr. Richard’s tragic childhood, when his mother and two sisters were killed, he withholds the request for his father; instead, the boy quietly helps with Mr. Richard’s backbreaking labour, and perhaps his soft hands begin to touch a hard, broken heart. Yet Jam does not offer abstract thematic commentary; rather, we see how their muscles strain as they silently work the tools, how Mr. Richard’s bandaged wound drips blood as he barks short commands. The boy’s father eventually joins them, and shared work, rest, and unspoken thoughts lead to mutual respect and, the boy is briefly told, a “settled” debt. The boy hears no more, but years later, visiting home, he learns that Richard and his father have become friends. Zhang’s final illustration shows two men of equal size, carrying identical fishing rods, walking happily together. The boy’s hands have joined these two men’s hearts.

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