because it seems particularly American. What it seems, in fact, is particularly Dickensian. An orphan and alone, Bud has to deal with hunger, poverty, and the cruelty of mean-minded adults. His life goes from bad to worse, until, in a traditionally tear-jerking happy ending, he finally finds himself in a place where people will love him and look after him — and where those people who love him turn out to be his actual blood relatives, and fairly wealthy to boot. Under the naturalistic veneer of its carefully-perceived 1930s American setting, *Bud Not Buddy* is about as traditional a Victorian melodrama as can be imagined.

For that reason, I think, it's a deeply satisfying book. Curtis clearly knows what works in children's fiction, and what works best, often, is what has been working for some centuries now: stories about orphans who go through hair-raising adventures on their way to happy homes and happy endings. There's nothing particularly Canadian about that. But then there's nothing particularly American about it either — except, perhaps, the chutzpah to revive a plot so creaky and the ingenuity to find a time and place in which to set the story that actually allow the melodrama to seem convincingly plausible. The talent that allows Curtis to create believable characters and suspenseful situations is his alone, and transcends questions of nationality.

It'd be nice to be able to claim a novel as good as *Bud Not Buddy* as a text of Canadian children's literature. In fact, I happily do so. But even in doing so I sense significant differences between this novel and the children's literature produced specifically in and for the community of Canadian children's publishers, editors, librarians and teachers. A lot of that literature is just as satisfying — but, I sense, in different ways. The challenge this Newbery-award-winning Canadian novel by an American citizen creates, for myself and others, is to find ways of enunciating the difference.

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A Wonderful Journey into History

The Mystery of Ireland's Eye. Shane Peacock. Penguin Canada/A Viking Trade Paperback, 1999. $16.99. ISBN 0-67088541-X.

> 'Ireland's Eye' way out there, on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, there is a ghost town — it was like something from a dream. (25)

Captivated by an unexplainable force, eleven-year-old Dylan Maples knows that he has to take the ocean kayaking trip to Ireland's Eye. After a year's preparation, he has convinced his parents that he is ready to go with them on this dangerous journey.

Inspired by his own adventure to Ireland's Eye, author Shane Peacock gives much life to the "dead" small island in Trinity Bay, once the east-most settlement of Canada. A controversial resettlement scheme throughout the '50s and '60s encouraged the residents of nearly 200 outports to move to mainland Newfoundland where the government offered better services. As a result, only 64 outporters lived on Ireland's Eye by the early '60s. A few years later, the place was totally "abandoned." Following Dylan, readers voyage into the fascinating past of Newfoundland.

For young adults as well as for new immigrants, the book is also valuable in learning about the history of hockey, that major part of Canadian culture. The "ghost town" was not the only thing that haunts Dylan; his beloved grandfather, who has just passed away, returns and speaks to him in his dreams. They used to share their love for hockey by watching televised games together during the hockey season. Great hockey stars such as Syl Apps, Bill Barilko, and Teeder Kennedy were common topics of grandfather's stories.

This journey into history is never smooth; at times there are terrifying elements: a gigantic fin whale of "greyhound bus" size swimming beneath Dylan's kayak; smoke coming from an empty town; a haunted house; a horrifying graveyard; ghosts, and villains. With an unpredictable plot and vivid details, Peacock pulls readers into the story. We hear the raging waves, feel the heart beats of Dylan, and see eye-to-eye with the Ireland's eye!

Also fascinating is Dylan's voyage of self-discovery. Perhaps the biggest mystery of all for young-adult readers is how twelve-year-old Dylan gains such skills, strength, and maturity in one short year to single-handedly kayak in the stormy Atlantic.

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Disconnected? Searching for Meaning in Shelley Hrdlitschka's Novels

Beans on Toast. Shelley Hrdlitschka. Orca, 1998. 122 pp. $7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-116-5. ***Disconnected***. Shelley Hrdlitschka. Orca, 1998. 160 pp. $7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-105-X.

In *Beans on Toast* and *Disconnected*, Shelley Hrdlitschka renders a portrait of adolescence that is intriguingly readable but ultimately hollow. The author manipulates weighty themes into plot vehicles, forfeiting real depth in favour of page-turning drama.

Beans on Toast, Hrdlitschka's first novel, tells the story of a lonely thirteen-year-old flute player named Madison, who is spending the summer at band camp. The back of the novel informs us that Madison's sense of alienation stems from her parents' recent divorce. Hrdlitschka does mention the divorce, but she uses it as