

other, they began passing the puck back and forth. The only sound in the morning air was the slap of the hard black puck against first one stick and then the other.”

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Of Gods, Maidens and Mummies

A Gift for Ampato. Susan Vande Griek. Illus. Mary Jane Gerber. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1999. 109 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-359-5.

In 1995 an American archaeologist, Johan Reinhard, discovered the mummified body of a teenage Inca girl near the top of the Ampato mountain in Peru. Researchers believe that the young girl, nicknamed the Ice maiden, was sacrificed by the Incas to appease the mountain gods. *A Gift for Ampato* is a short novel inspired by the discovery and scientists' study of it.

Susan Vande Griek succeeds in transforming this archaeological event from a potentially distressing account of loss, human sacrifice and victimization into a more uplifting story of redemption in praise of the right to choose one's own destiny and identity. This successful reworking of history in fiction is owed to the sophistication of Vande Griek's narrative structure and the transcendence of the theme she develops in it.

Like the woven shawl that appears to be a leitmotif in *A Gift*, the hallmark of this story is interlocking narrative threads. Vande Griek weaves a story out of two narrative strands: the fictional account of the life and experiences of the young girl prior to her sacrifice framed in the factual report of the finding and the investigation surrounding it. The latter begins and ends the novel and runs through the entire book in the form of introductory passages to each chapter. Fact and fiction are so interwoven stylistically and structurally that it is not always clear where one begins and the other ends. For one thing, although the framing account echoes newspaper reports of the finding, Vande Griek tells it in the subjective manner of the storyteller.

Furthermore, the narrative focus is not cast on only one character in the fashion of conventional stories or historical accounts, but rather on three female characters whose experiences are linked: Timta, an unwilling yet admirable heroine; her friend Karwa, a remarkable example of strength and maturity in a young girl, and Riti, an older woman whose loss of a daughter to the gods is redeemed in both girls.

A Gift for Ampato is by no means an easy story to tell on account of its subject matter, yet Vande Griek is able to carry it through because of her sensitive and intelligent approach. The story is bound to challenge the moral and ethical beliefs of young readers. It is perhaps for this reason that Vande Griek appends an author's note detailing her sources, her approach and objective: to express disap-

proval of conformity and encourage resistance to harmful social practices. Perhaps she should have allowed the story to speak for itself because it really does.

Mayan Myth/History for Today's Children

Popol Vuh: a Sacred Book of the Maya. Victor Montejo. Trans. David Unger. Illus. Luis Garay. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1999. 85 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-88899-334-X.

It is no small feat to adapt a text as complex in structure and language as the *Popol Vuh* for a young readership. The *Popol Vuh* may be likened to the Judeo-Christian book of the creation, "Genesis." Unlike the Bible, however, this Mayan mythological account of the creation does not have a long tradition of translations and adaptations for children. Thus Victor Montejo, it must be appreciated, treads virgin territory in his endeavour to make this great and intriguing pre-Columbian story accessible to children aged nine and above.

Montejo's young readers will not find here the linear narrative of many Western tales and perhaps this might prove challenging to them. This is because although Montejo's is an abridged version he does not compromise the narrative structure of the original work. The stories that constitute part one in his book are devoted to the myth of creation. However, after two futile attempts by the gods to create humans, that line of the narrative is dropped, to be taken up again in what is part three of the book: "The Creation of the Men of Corn." Meanwhile, between these two sections, part two, "The Amazing Twins," is devoted solely to the heroic activities of the gods in the sky, on earth and in the underworld. In part four, the



Illustration from Popol Vuh