

in the latter book and more energetic in the former. Soft line-and-wash illustrations at chapter headings and on several full pages add the visual appeal that is still important for the targeted age group.

*Catherine Simpson's second picture book, **Sailor: The Hangashore Newfoundland Dog**, was recently published by Tuckamore Books. She lives with her husband and son in Lewisporte, Newfoundland.*

Above the Clouds

High Flight: A Story of World War II. Linda Granfield. Illus. Michael Martchenko. Tundra, 1999. 32 pp. \$18.99. ISBN 0-88776-469-X.

"High Flight" is by far and away the most recognized aviation poem ever written. Only John Pudney's "For Johnny" approaches it in notoriety, and Pudney was an established poet by the time he penned his verse. Indeed, part of the appeal of "High Flight" lies in the fact that John Gillespie Magee was a mere boy of nineteen when he wrote it. That such a young soul could conjure up such timeless phrases fills us with wonder.

In this biography, it would have been easy for Linda Granfield to lapse into hero worship of Magee. Born in Shanghai, educated at Rugby School, comfortable in New England high society, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force at age eighteen — this is the stuff of romance. Happily, Granfield resists the temptation to



*Illustration by Michael Martchenko
from High Flight*

hagiography and instead presents a nuanced portrait of the poet. Enthusiastic, gifted, and attractive, Magee was also over-confident, brash, and immature. In a particularly apt phrase, Granfield characterizes him as “a talented teen, not a mature man” (14). Furthermore, he may have given us the most powerful evocation of flight in the English language, but clearly he had a fair bit to learn about flying himself, as his rather spotty training record reveals. Still, Magee’s very human flaws merely make his life story all the more poignant. With keen attention to detail and an obvious affection for the subject, Granfield sketches a life full of potential that was never realized.

“High Flight” is such a lush, almost Imagist poem that it would be a challenge to any illustrator, but Michael Martchenko is more than up to the task. The domestic scenes from Magee’s life are warm and lively, but he really excels at the aviation scenes. Billows of orange and grey hang above London during the Blitz, towering clouds loom over the earth as a single aircraft bursts from the gloom into clear sky above — Martchenko renders the atmosphere very much in the way that Magee must have seen it.

Magee was like millions of other men and women whose lives were cut short by war, although his poem clearly set him apart. As Granfield infers, he bears more than a passing resemblance to his fellow Rugby alumnus, Rupert Brooke, who also left the world with one immortal poem before dying young.

*Jonathan F. Vance is an associate professor of history at the University of Western Ontario. Among his publications are **Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War** (UBC Press, 1997).*

Rocks in the Stream of Story

Music for the Tsar of the Sea. Celia Barker Lottridge. Illus. Harvey Chan. Groundwood, 1998. 32 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-328-5.

When artists as accomplished as storyteller Celia Barker Lottridge and illustrator Harvey Chan collaborate, a reader expects a remarkable book. *Music for the Tsar of the Sea* is that — lovely, distinguished and graceful. It is a beautifully-illustrated book. What it is not, however, is a remarkable *picture* book. It lacks the interplay of text and picture essential to any picture book, especially to a tale at whose heart is movement — the fluidity of music, the flow of stream, the surge of waves — and the integration of identity.

Lottridge writes beautifully, makes witty use of liquid metaphors, and drops in details which resonate and expand throughout the book. Her re-telling of the tale of Sadko, a poor minstrel who gains wealth but forgets to keep his word when the tsar of the sea richly rewards him for his talents, emphasizes his need to balance all facets of his identity. Sadko must be both musician and merchant, must not sacrifice his artistic self to distractions resulting from his business acumen. More