

A final quibble about what I think is in most ways a groundbreaking collection: I am puzzled by an occasional tone of defensiveness or even querulousness with regard to the field. An example is found in Beverly Lyon Clark's "Introduction," which complains that "mainstream feminist critics have not been eager to embrace children's literature" but instead "appropriate" or "ignore" it (4-5). Similarly, Mitzi Myers complains that "if feminist social historians and literary critics are now trying to count women in, they are still leaving children out" (25). Surely this collection, which has brought together an incredible variety of feminist scholars — many of them at the top of their respective fields, others emerging as future leaders, all of them taking the imbrication of gender and children's culture very seriously indeed — gives the lie to that concern.

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The Inside Scoop on Children's Writers and Writing

Writing Maniac: How I Grew Up to be a Writer (And You Can, Too!). Sheree Fitch. Pembroke, 2000. 96 pp. \$14.95 paper. ISBN 1-55138-121-4. *The Young Writer's Companion*. Sarah Ellis. Greenwood, 1999. 128 pp. \$12.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-371-4, 0-88899-411-7. *The Storymakers: Writing Children's Books; 83 Authors Talk About Their Work*. Canadian Children's Book Centre. Pembroke, 2000. 176 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN 1-55138-108-7.

Young readers love to find out more about their favourite authors. Young writers are eager for hints and tips to help them achieve the same success. Three recent books, all appropriate for readers aged eight to twelve, meet both these needs.

Writing Maniac is part autobiography, part writing manual, pulling the young reader in with its inviting layout, snappy titles, small bites of information and irresistibly playful tone. Positive and encouraging, Fitch frees young writers to stretch their imaginations and have fun with words, ideas, dreams and the music of language. She shares her own successes and failures while providing lots of exercises and mind-stretchers for young authors. A useful booklist is included at the end, as well as a "List of writing words," with special emphasis on poetry. No computer or Internet references are included, and a common question "Where can I send my writing?" is not addressed. The focus here is on creating and having fun with writing, and Fitch does that well.

A journal format was chosen for *The Young Writer's Companion*, with ample space throughout for the reader to add notes and ideas. The book is divided into eight appealing sections on themes such as Islands, Dreams, or Family Stories, which connect information about how famous writers used these themes and techniques, with exercises for the reader to try. Ellis combines her own hints, writing activities and idea-starters with quotations from a variety of authors. Helpful annotated booklists end each section — an overall index would make this even more

useful — and email addresses and websites are included throughout. Given that this book is intended to be written in, it is unfortunate that it is almost impossible to open flat (at least in the paperback version reviewed here). It's a stimulating and colourful resource for the aspiring young writer.

A total of 83 Canadian authors are profiled in the Canadian Children's Book Centre's *The Storymakers: Writing Children's Books*. (A companion volume, *The Storymakers: Illustrating Children's Books*, is also available.) This large format, easy-to-read volume includes photos and the usual biographical information about life, publications, and awards. What makes the listing especially appealing for young writers are the behind-the-scenes views of how each writer creates his or her work. Under headings such as "Something nobody knew about me (until now)," "How I work," and "Tips for young creators," authors share as they choose to, in their own voice. The volume is clearly organized, with a contents list at the front, and information at the end about the CCBC.

Together, these three books will satisfy any young reader's curiosity about writers and writing — except perhaps for that perennial question "How much money do you make?" The inside scoop, after all, only goes so far.

*Margaret Springer is an author and writing teacher whose most recent book for young readers is **Dr. Beastly's Lab** (Nelson, 1998).*