

depth in that, while evocative and sometimes derived from real memories, the text accompanying the photographs is often based on assumptions and projections by the author (“with the gentle touch of her hand, this young immigrant mother comforts her small son”). While it might be reflective of a lack of artifacts, there does seem to be a greater representation of British (war brides, home children) and other well-dressed immigrants than of the latter post-war economic refugees. The use of the term “DPs” with its derogatory connotations is also unfortunate. *The Rebels* provides very sketchy data on any given character and no true understanding of any rebel cause can be garnered from the text. The author’s introduction is simplistic and overly dramatic: “a successful Canadian rebel is a person who achieves change through peaceful means, not bloodshed,” while “some rebels...break the law, take control by force, or even kill” (1). Some characters are included but there is little or no development of their actions or role in the events of their time; the inclusion of and a quote from Florence Nightingale is questionable in a work on Canadian rebels. The need for tighter editing is also apparent in two casual references, on facing pages, to people being sent to a penal colony: one indicates it was in Australia, the other that it was in Van Diemen’s Land. With these failings, these titles remain more of an interesting scrapbook or quick survey of the topic rather than interpretative historical or biographical works. As fiction, *Mr. Dickens Hits Town* has no such expectations.

In general, all three books are enjoyable reads that entertain and maintain the storyteller’s voice in their presentations. For material aimed at those aged between eight and twelve, they each provide a good lens through which to filter the events, actions and experiences being recalled and could serve to introduce or to use as a related activity in a more in-depth study of their topics.

Anna Chiota is Manager, Branch Services with the St. Catharines Public Library with over twenty years experience in children’s services and with an MA in History.

Shakespeare For Kids

All the World’s a Stage: William Shakespeare, A Pop-up Biography. Michael Bender. Raincoast, 1999. Unpag. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55192-271-1. *Hamlet For Kids.* Lois Burdett. Firefly, 2000. 64 pp. \$19.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55209-522-3, 1-55209-530-4.

Introducing children to Shakespeare so that they can learn to love the works of the Bard in spite of the complexities of his language and the passage of 400 years can be difficult. Michael Bender’s *All the World’s a Stage: William Shakespeare, A Pop-up Biography* attempts to make Shakespeare’s historical context accessible to a young audience. Following fresh on the heels of the Academy Award-winning pseudo-biographical film *Shakespeare in Love*, Bender’s text presents a glimpse into the Bard’s life that is more suitable to children than the nudity-filled mainstream movie. *All the World’s a Stage* provides a good overview of Shakespeare’s life and the context of his times including descriptions of Stratford-upon-Avon, London, the life of the

players, and the workings of the Globe Theater. Bender also includes a chronology of Shakespeare's life and a brief glossary of terms such as "hornbook," "mummer's plays," and "patron" which help the reader learn more about life on the early modern English stage. The few pop-up illustrations in the book (there are only five real pop-ups, the rest being fold-outs or pictures that must be slid or flipped into view) provide useful representations of Shakespeare's life on and off the stage; the most effective of which shows a scene from *Macbeth* being performed at the Globe from a perspective that places the reader among the groundlings in the audience. The downfall of Bender's text rests in the visual disparity between the pop-ups, and other illustrations, including the book's cover, which seem to be aimed at young children, and the sophistication of the text, which is clearly written for an older child with a well-developed vocabulary. The incongruity of the book's format with the written text could be overcome by having parents or other adults read the book to children, but the highly factual biographical nature does not lend itself easily to the usual bedtime reading.

A much more suitable introduction to Shakespeare can be found in Lois Burdett's *Hamlet For Kids*. Coinciding with the Stratford Festival of Canada's 2000 season, which featured Paul Gross in the titular role of Hamlet, *Hamlet For Kids* is the sixth Shakespeare play that Burdett has adapted for children (*Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the others) and it is the seventh book in her series Shakespeare Can Be Fun! All the titles in the series, including *Hamlet For Kids*, are written in easy-to-read rhyming couplets and feature imaginative and colourful illustrations created by her grade two and three students from (appropriately enough) Hamlet Public School in Stratford.

Burdett has received numerous awards and commendations for her work in making Shakespeare more accessible to children; *Hamlet For Kids* demonstrates why Burdett's work is deserving of these honours. Burdett's text reduces the four-hour play significantly by cutting extensive dialogue and replacing much of it with summary lines that slightly lighten the tone of the tragedy, such as "'To be, or not to be, that is the question,' he mused. / For the meaning of life had become confused. / The world for Hamlet had become a chore, / 'To die is to sleep and nothing more'" (32). Despite the excising, *Hamlet For Kids* still deals with the complications of regicide, revenge, and betrayal without losing too much of the intricacies of the plot. As Kenneth Branagh notes in his foreword, "Fun is the key to this book. It takes a cultural icon and makes you understand its power in an effortlessly enjoyable way." Beyond introducing children to Shakespeare, sharing Burdett's version of Hamlet with kids could potentially offer many parents an exciting and enlightening way of re-engaging with a text that had previously been relegated to the memories of high school English classes, thus fostering a love of Shakespeare that could last a lifetime.

Jennifer Ailles has completed an MA in English at the University of Guelph and is now in the Ph.D. program in English at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York.