

To Honduras with Love from Holly Drive School. Mary-Jane Hampton. Illus. Jane Gallinaugh. Nimbus, 2000. 40 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55109-335-9.

In telling the story of young Emma's endeavour to send love itself, in the guise of her favourite Teddy bear, to the children of a devastated city, Mary-Jane Hampton illustrates some important points. The first of these, that even a child's single act of kindness can inspire others to follow suit, is demonstrated from the start of the story as Emma's generous gift snowballs into a large collective gesture. As thousands of favourite bears join Emma's own, countless adults share in the children's generosity as they volunteer their time and their work to safely convey the Teddy-bears to hurricane-torn Honduras. In these post-September 11 days, the second point conveyed in the story is perhaps as important as the first. Emma's initiative as she responds to a crisis so much larger than herself shows that no one, not even a young child, needs to feel helpless in the face of catastrophic events.

Yet, for all its didactic virtues, the story, interspersed with information about Honduras and the nature of hurricanes, is lacking in the magical flavour that characterizes the best in children's literature. The most suspenseful event in the narrative occurs when the bags of bears are accidentally abandoned in a food-freezer in Florida. The choice of the format is itself a puzzling one. Profusely illustrated in a serviceable manner, the story is published in the square, flat shape of very young children's books, while the text itself, printed quite tightly in smallish characters, would be too hard to handle for the four- or five-year-olds to whom such editions are normally destined. With its cover chock-full of Teddy-bear portraits, the book would not be readily chosen by the seven- to nine-year-olds to whom such tightly-woven text would apply. Perhaps the choice of edition indicates that the book is principally meant to be read to the children by parents or teachers rather than to be selected by young readers themselves.

Claudine Pope writes in Toronto.

Ooo-cha! Colleen Sydor. Illus. Ruth Ori. Annick, 1999. 32 pp. \$7.95 paper. \$17.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-605-5.

This whimsical spoof of "Little Red Riding Hood" by author Colleen Sydor is an engaging tale. The story features a fearless young girl named Emily who sets out to visit her grandmother armed with her good witch wand. During her trek across the wild forest, Emily encounters a tiger, who demands a piece of her seven-layer chocolate cake with triple fudge icing and who also forgets to say please. Emily calmly waves her magic wand, says the magic word "Ooo-cha" and turns him into a tiger lily. Other rude wild animals that demand goodies from Emily's basket end up being transformed into wild flowers for Emily's bouquet.

I found this book to be delightful in every way. The story is well paced and funny. Emily is a confident and strong character, providing a wonderful role model of a young girl who uses her head when faced with a problem. Her preoccupation with table manners makes her seem real in spite of her magic powers. As well, the ending of the story includes a clever twist when Emily discovers that the Three