

*Wild Bog Tea*. Annette LeBox. Illus. Harvey Chan. Groundwood, 2001. Unpag. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-406-0.

This book evokes reflections about aging and change as it describes the life cycle of a wild bog. The “dreamy” illustrations accompany the text well, given that few urban children today live next to a wild bog. The explanation of the names and terms as well as the descriptions of plants follow the text at the end of the book, which will help parents and caregivers read this book aloud to young children and then follow up with discussions about the text and the illustrations. More details and illustrations with captions would help those reading aloud answer any questions that may arise.

The narrative of the grandfather growing old as the bog is transformed, along with the thoughts of the boy as he grows into a man, mirror the passage of time and the bog’s life cycle without being intrusive. Younger readers would enjoy reading this book on their own because it recreates a gentle timeless world. It is a wonderful description of how a grandfather spends his time with his grandson and helps shape a love of nature. More information on how children may be able to help preserve wild bogs could be presented to “plant the seeds” for future action on environmental preservation.

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*Three Tales of Enchantment: Sleeping Beauty, The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast*. Retold by Marilyn Helmer. Illus. Kasia Charko. Kids Can, 2001. 32 pp. \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-843-2. Ages 5-8. *Three Teeny Tiny Tales: The Elves and the Shoemaker, The Gingerbread Man, Thumbelina*. Retold by Marilyn Helmer. Illus. Veselina Tomova. Kids Can, 2001. 32 pp. \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-841-6. Ages 5-8.

All of the tales included in these two collections, as retold by Marilyn Helmer, are lyrically rendered and enchanting, particularly suited to children old enough to sink into a good story. Indeed, the act of storytelling itself is highlighted in “The Little Mermaid,” for we are told that, “In the evening, the sisters gathered to hear the tales their grandmother told of the world above the sea” (15). Just as the mermaid and her sisters are captivated by tales of “this wondrous world” (15), so too do we find ourselves drawn to these familiar tales. Since each collection is centred on a particular theme — in these cases, tales of enchantment and tales of small heroes or heroines — easy comparison and discussion are possible, prompted by the brilliantly-coloured and engaging illustrations. Veselina Tomova in particular uses bright colours and vivid characterization to attract readers’ attention, especially in her portrayal of the poor shoemaker and his wife and the elves that help them. The gingerbread man also leads his pursuers on a mighty chase, one which children will follow with glee, although they may later be startled by the image of Thumbelina grasped in a beetle’s claws. In contrast, Kasia Charko’s illustrations are more sedate, focused on the opulence and fairy-tale atmospheres of the tales of enchantment. Particularly pleasing is her opening illustration in “Sleeping Beauty,”

focusing on the king, queen, and their newborn daughter. Unfortunately, as pleasing as most of her illustrations are, she chose not to render a full depiction of the beast in "Beauty and the Beast." While children may arguably use their imaginations at this point, I was left without a sense of satisfaction regarding the Beast's character, since it found little physical expression. In any case, such criticism does little to diminish the lasting power of the stories and illustrations contained in these two volumes.

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