witness to events. There exists little to hold reader interest, either through suspense or identification with the main character. In addition, dialogue in the novel often seems forced and unnatural, with at least one glaring anachronism: one male character speaks of "making strange," (223) a usage that did not come into being until the twentieth-century.

The novel begins as Mary sneaks aboard the family's wagon so she can be part of the cross-border raid her father and brothers plan in order to take back the possessions the family lost when the American rebels forced them from their home. Alert readers will sense something inconsistent here, for this deliberate disobedience signals an irresponsibility unexpected in the nineteen-year-old eldest daughter of a pioneer. Perhaps to stir initial interest, Crook tries to make her heroine quirky and unpredictable; but the rest of the novel shows her staid and dependable.

Perhaps more significant is Crook's unwillingness to confront the ambiguity of her characters' actions, abruptly veering away from conflict whenever it threatens the ideality of the family. Adolescents in the age range for which this book is intended are always quick to pick up on attempts to evade issues. What Crook does with annoying frequency is introduce a conflict, then ignore or minimize its potential implications as if, again, she were trying to create interest but without risking the reader's disapprobation.

Crook's idealizing of the Loyalists leaves her open to the charge of stereotyping. An old problem in schools is the disparity between American and Canadian accounts of the Loyalist movement. Crook, a former teacher, enters heartily into the fray by portraying the few rebels who appear as either simpering cowards or vicious brutes. The result, in one scene, is that she forgets to give the reader essential information: After Mary sees six men sneaking toward the house where her father and brothers are inside claiming their possessions, she fires shots in the air to warn them of the threat, and the rebels are duly rounded up. But how did the rebels learn about the planned raid, Mary wonders? The important question is asked, but in the heat of trying to portray the six rebels as obsequious murderers and thieves, it is never answered.

Eric Henderson is an English instructor in Victoria, BC.

A Teenage Thriller Centres on an Abducting Father

How Do You Spell Abducted? Cherylyn Stacey. Red Deer College Press, 1996. 135 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-148-9.

In July and August of 1996 this novel for ten- to fourteen-year-olds caused a brief censorship brouhaha which temporarily increased its sales. Michael Coren, who obviously hadn't read the book with an open mind, wrote in *The Financial Post* that it was pernicious rubbish that would teach children to hate their fathers. An Alberta MLA, who hadn't read the book at all, suggested it should be banned.

It is, in fact, a very ordinary teenage thriller with a bad title (spelling has nothing to do with the story). The situation that gives rise to the plot is realistic:

a difficult divorce in which one of the parents is immature and self-centred. If Coren had read carefully, he would have seen that the abducting father, far from being evil, is just an over-grown child given to temper tantrums, and that the root of his behaviour is his over-indulgent mother (32). He is further exonerated by his daughter's recognition that she herself is like him, and by his admission of blame at the end.

The story is told by Debbie, the oldest of the three children, and her voice is that of the generic adolescent narrator found in far too many young adult novels: a mix of flat, teenage idiom intended to create verisimilitude and adult cliches that appear to be the best the author can do by way of depth:

> Mom isn't perfect. Lord knows, if you were going to rate her impatience on a scale of one to ten, she'd be an eleven-and-a-half.... Anyway, even if Mom isn't perfect, us kids are first in her life. It's a very safe feeling, knowing that.
>
> Paige yawned and stretched beside me. A bird trilled as though its heart would burst with joy. (102)

The page-turner plot has plenty of uncomplicated action. The tension begins on page one ("The hair on the back of my neck prickled as I listened to that long silence.") and is kept up by near-escapes and near-disasters, but it's impossible to feel that the children are ever in real danger. The last four pages wrap up the action neatly and provide a dollop of condensed character development to assure the reader that this particular family problem is solved: "Maybe Dad was growing up. I guess we all grew up a lot that horrible summer" (135)

There is humour in the back seat bickering of the children during the long car trip, and the old man who gives them shelter is an interesting addition — he is running away from *his* children. On a scale of one to ten, this novel would be a six-and-a-half.

Anna E. Altmann teaches children's literature in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta.

The Dreamer in the Dream

Awake and Dreaming. Kit Pearson. Viking/Penguin, 1996. 228 pp. $19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-670-86954-6.

"You seem so much like me as a child. I recognized your *yearning* so much" (197). So says the ghost author within the story. It is this essential concept, a child's yearning, that pulls the reader into this fantastic, yet realistic, story. It is a story about a nine-year-old reader who encounters a ghost, a writer, and shows how their lonely worlds merge and free them from their separate despair.

This is a story about today's world incorporating universal themes of alienation, family conflict, and the triumph of love and the imagination. The moving force is ideals, as revealed through literature and realised in the real world. Books and imagination are the protagonist's only comfort in her grey world of urban poverty.