

presents the UN in terms of its organization, history, peacekeeping efforts, development efforts, and human rights declarations. The final chapter examines the future of the UN as one which can and should be more effective. Under the first three headings are accounts of many important events in UN history. In the last three chapters, information is presented with rhetorical questions alongside. These challenge students to consider carefully the complexities of international aid and human rights. The text is further supplemented by over 80 photographs, and sidebars containing biographies of eleven prominent Canadians. Also included are a glossary, a list of UN World Heritage Sites in Canada, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Preamble to the Charter, and photos of all six Secretaries General. The author succeeds in making the UN accessible to those encountering it for the first time; the concepts are easily related to student experience; and the language is appropriate to the twelve to fourteen-year-old. But while *Forts of Canada* provides the teacher with many activities and ideas for enriching their classroom, *The UN: Its History...* is unfortunately bereft of any practical suggestions. As an academic, the author is perhaps unaware that the most valued school resources include strategies for teaching the subject at hand.

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HIGH SEAS DRAMA: AN EMOTIONAL CHALLENGE

On Board the Titanic. Shelley Tanaka. Illus. Ken Marschall. Scholastic/Madison Press, 1996. 48 pp. \$19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-590-24894-4 cloth, ISBN 0-590-24895-2 paper.

The author's motivation in writing for children is an area of critical interest that is as yet insufficiently explored. Many of those who write for children still appear to be guided in their choice of vehicle by the myth, curiously typical of the Victorian era, that their efforts should be devoted to entertainment and the demonstration of moral values. While these aims are legitimate enough, they should not dissuade writers with larger vision from exploring other opportunities in this specialized field. These opportunities include a very different area of human experience, the response of individuals to crises and the traumatic effects of coping with disaster, both of which are significant factors in the shaping of character.

On Board the Titanic, an excellent example of an opportunity to deal with such reactions, is both a joy to handle and a pleasure to read. To one not unfamiliar with ships and the sea, and well beyond the age limits of the potential readership, it has the ring of truth in its straightforward handling of the practical and emotional aspects of a marine disaster which, at the time of its occurrence, literally staggered the world. The elapsed time between Titanic's collision with

the iceberg and its final plunge to the ocean bed — several hours, as compared with the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* in the St. Lawrence east of Quebec, when the ship went down in fourteen minutes with the loss of over a thousand lives — allowed ample time for passengers and crew to reveal, by their individual responses to the imminence of danger, every aspect of human character and personality, from cowardice to supreme courage. Certain improbabilities in young Jack Thayer's reaction to particular events during that tragic night do not blur the picture that finally emerges, that of a young man exhibiting courage and a certain nobility of character in the face of danger and subsequent hardship while awaiting rescue. His relationship with friends and acquaintances made on shipboard reflect well on his involvement in the night's high drama. Shelley Tanaka, the author, has also made skilful use of the responses of members of the ship's company to an event none of them had reason to believe could bring a tragic end to the maiden voyage of a vessel which was then the acknowledged pride of the whole shipping world.

The personal narrative is supported by numerous box inserts in the text giving factual details of the ship and its operation, a feature which serves to support the dramatic development of a story based on the true experience of survivors. The sinking of the *Titanic* had some of the elements of Greek drama, and this book exploits these elements in a way that is meaningful to young readers. In a book of this kind, style is not the main consideration. If that were the case, then the point might be made that the author has attempted too simplistic a treatment of dramatic material. Instead, the impact on eager and receptive young minds is apt to be one which, on a reasonable assessment of the author's methodology, must be acknowledged as having achieved its purpose — to stress how strength or weakness of character respond to crisis; how a dramatic event may create a legend.

Not least among the attractive features of *On Board the Titanic* are the superb illustrations: both Ken Marschall's paintings and a selection of archival photographs. Without these, a story of such dramatic proportions, however well told, would not have been as pleasurable or as instructive. To anyone familiar with the sea, the artist's rendering of highlights in the *Titanic* story reflects the kind of research of which both artist and publisher may be proud. This is living history of the very best kind — a book that merits the attention not merely of the young readers for whom it is intended but also of those whose responsibility it is to guide them as they learn to relate the impact of events on the moral and social outlook of a generation. In this sense, Shelley Tanaka has pointed the way to a wide field of opportunity in the writing of books for children.

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