

well both to dispose of her life's irritants (including, initially, boys) and to try to see herself more clearly. The gentle humour he draws from all of his characters (to say nothing of the animals that enjoy such a lively existence on these pages) is, like the personality of his heroine, always spirited.

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PICTURE BOOK ON UKRAINIAN INTERNMENT

Silver Threads. Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch. Illus. Michael Martchenko. Viking, 1996. 32 pp. \$19.99 cloth. ISBN 0-670-86677-6.

This is an unusual and in some ways quite difficult children's picture book. It tells the story of Ivan and Anna, who immigrate to Canada from the Ukraine. During World War I, Ivan is interned by the Canadian government as an enemy alien. Anna is left to work the farm alone until his return, kept company only by a spider. Michael Martchenko has done, as usual, superb illustrations to accompany the text. They capture a sense of Ukrainianness without being stereotypical.

The story is interesting and well-told, with sufficient repetition to keep children involved in the rhythm of the tale. The title, *Silver Threads*, refers to the spider which keeps Anna company while Ivan is gone. However, the spider is puzzling. The real point of the story is the historical lesson. By the end of the story, one gets the feeling the spider was superfluous, a connective device with little meaning.

The internment of "enemy aliens" during both world wars were important events in our history. Most Canadians know something about the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II; far fewer know that the same treatment was accorded other groups of "enemy aliens," some of them born in Canada, such as Germans and Ukrainians. From this point of view, the book is valuable and interesting, in that it resurrects a lost episode from Canada's past.

However, many people, especially non-Ukrainian-Canadians, will be uncomfortable with the book for the very same reason. They will not have the historical knowledge to put this story in context. The "historical note" by the author at the end of the book will not be of much help, as it essentially reiterates the same information given in the story. There is another side to the internment story, one not presented here, which raises the question: is it appropriate to treat such a complex issue with a simplistic good vs. evil story? Nevertheless, reading the book could offer an opportunity to discuss the difficult ethical and political issues raised by internment. These are heavier than the usual personal moral dilemmas offered by children's books. This is especially true if one goes beyond the happy ending offered by Skrypuch and points out (as she does in the "Historical Note") that many internees never had their property returned.

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