

“portico” makes an appearance, and Mabel’s teddy bear is named “Snickerknickerbox.” As in *There Were Monkeys in My Kitchen*, Fitch ends the book with an imaginative twist, introducing a character named Gertrude Green. Sheree Fitch’s talents are considerable and we can look forward to a long series of interesting characters and situations from this writer.

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## A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

**Grandma’s Heart.** Shenaaz Nanji. Illus. Rossitza Skortcheva Penney. Toronto: TSAR Publications, 1993. Unpag., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-920661-35-1.  
**Teeny Weeny Penny.** Shenaaz Nanji. Illus. Rossitza Skortcheva Penney. Toronto: TSAR Publications, 1993. Unpag., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-920661-36-X.

Shenaaz Nanji’s two picture books, *Grandma’s Heart* and *Teeny Weeny Penny*, centre on the child’s growing awareness of the world outside herself and the interconnectedness of the family circle. To use Piaget’s terminology, Shaira—she is the central character in both books—wavers between the pre-operational phase, in which she views the world from a self-referential, egocentric perspective, and the stage of concrete operations, where she receives the first glimmerings of the relationship of parts to a whole and wholes to the parts. In short, she learns much more than the importance of sharing through her discovery and acceptance of the intricate web of family relationships.

In *Grandma’s Heart* Shaira moves from a world where everything works according to “My game. My rules. I always win,” and in which “Nani-Ma is MY grandma,” to “Nani-Ma is OUR Grandma.” Shenaaz Nanji orders this recognition in the form of a cumulative narrative which reflects the puzzling pressures the little girl experiences as each member of the family claims Grandma’s attention.

Shaira ventures further from her private world in *Teeny Weeny Penny* when she faces various pressures by friends and family to spend or save a special penny she has found. The Shaira who always wins in *Grandma’s Heart* this time has the advantage of a lucky penny. Winning pennies from her father enables her to satisfy the expectations of oth-



ers, while retaining her own individuality — and keeping her penny. The story allows children to participate in the character's dilemma, and most should certainly enjoy the ending.

Rossitza Skortcheva Penney's fanciful illustrations visually complement the fluctuations between the child's inner and outer worlds, and the criss-crossing back and forth between the imagination and practical reality. Firmly drafted figures and outlines spill over the pages and are coloured over in a manner reminiscent of a child's blithe refusal to stay within the lines while colouring. The images become a part of the text and extend the rich imagination of the little girl beyond the words on the page.

Both of Shenaaz Nanji's books celebrate the family and the individual and, at a time which sometimes seems more preoccupied with the atomization of the traditional family unit, they are welcome affirmations of basic values.

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#### LAUGH AT IT OR ADOPT IT: TWO VIEWS OF FEAR OF THE DARK

**Henry and the Cow Problem.** Iona Whishaw. Illus. Chum McLeod. Annick Press, 1992, 1995. Unpag., \$15.95, \$4.95 library binding, paper. ISBN 1-55037-375-7, 1-55037-374-9. **Something Might Be Hiding.** Celia Barker Lottridge. Illus. Paul Zwolak. Groundwood, 1994. Unpag., \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-176-2.

Fear of the dark, or, rather, what could be hidden by the dark, is a common fear of childhood, and one way to handle it is through storytelling. *Henry and the Cow Problem* and *Something Might Be Hiding* are two very different, yet effective, stories about that particular fear.

*Henry and the Cow Problem* is a funny, absurd little story about a boy afraid to go to bed because he thinks a cow will come and get him. The only problem with his fear is that he lives in a city, on the third floor of an apartment building. Whishaw takes the childhood fear of monsters in the dark

