matter ... gets them to pick up the book in the first place, and the fast-paced sports action keeps them involved from start to finish." Each book is around 100 pages, is set in an easily recognizable Canadian setting, and involves both boys and girls, and people from a variety of cultural and ethnic groups (although race is never an issue) and a variety of economic levels. Characterization is fairly shallow and character development uncomplicated and simple.

The sports action is, perhaps, the most convincing part of each story, as the authors write knowledgeably and vividly about the competitions in which the heroes are involved. However, the emotional problems each central character faces seem trite and clichéd and the resolutions and happy endings are too easy. In learning how to become proficient in a specific sport, each hero finds ways to overcome inner conflicts, family difficulties, and peer group pressures. As any reader of sports pages knows, athletic competition does not always build character; it may, in fact, bring out harmful aggressions and often emphasizes ego gratification. And, as baseball manager Leo Durocher observed half a century ago, nice guys often finish last.

In addition to the triteness of some of their plots, the novels make questionable assumptions about the moral and social values of sports. As a result the books seem like moralistic fables. Like many sports novels of the early twentieth century, they implicitly preach the values of friendship, honesty, and dedication, shaping both characters' actions and contests' outcomes to emphasize these points.

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A Strong Message from a Cast of Outsiders

Stranger on the Line. Marilyn Halvorson. Stoddart, 1997. 182 pp. $6.99 paper. ISBN 0-7736-74578.

Marilyn Halvorson has woven an entertaining and fast-paced story of courage and hope in *Stranger on the Line,* the third novel in her Steve Garrett series. Steve, now a disillusioned mixed-up twenty-year-old, teams up with a dozen rejected race horses and a crippled ex-jockey to discover that perhaps life has purpose after all.

There are many strengths to this book, including Halvorson's delightfully light hand with humour: "... it's not the fall that kills you, it's the sudden stop at the end." Another strength is her skill at capturing sharp graphic images: "... a huge bull moose raised his ugly mug from the pond. He stood gawking with a pink water lily hanging out of his mouth."

Perhaps the greatest strength, however, is Halvorson's intimate knowledge of horses and horse psychology. The description of the training of the horses for wagon racing — particularly the use of one steady and reliable horse to train the others — is fascinating, as are the background details of the Calgary Stampede chuckwagon races.

Interest builds steadily with one rapidly-paced action scene following another. Halvorson undoubtedly has an ear for a realistic teen "voice," though there are times during the first few chapters when the self-absorbed, glib, world-weary tone is in danger of being overdone. Fortunately, as soon as the action starts to build Steve's true voice emerges, and he becomes a realistic and likeable protagonist.

Another possible weakness comes in the ending. E.M. Forster once remarked that the ending of a novel was often the weakest part. This is true of *Strangers on the Line*. Having pulled for Steve through crisis after crisis, one wishes he might have been allowed to effect closure on at least one of his problems — either his relationship with Lynne or the threat from Romero. The fact that the book ends with both issues unresolved leaves the reader feeling vaguely unsatisfied. However, this is a minor criticism of an immensely enjoyable and fast-paced YA adventure novel.

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Hippie Child "Imprisoned" in Rosedale!

The Private Journal of Day Applepenny, Prisoner. Sheree Haughian. Monolith, 1997. 136 pp. $7.50 paper. ISBN 0-9682397-0-6.

Day Applepenny, the twelve-year-old protagonist of this recent novel for eleven- to thirteen-year olds, moves through the world of her readers' parents: this book is set during the 1974-1975 school year. Day, the child of a Rosedale woman who had escaped an oppressive wealthy family to join a hippie colony on Gabriola Island, is celebrating her twelfth birthday on an airplane to Toronto, where she will move in with her maternal grandmother and go to school for a year. The references to places, styles and events of 1974 seem just right, but this verisimilitude is likely lost on contemporary young readers, who will be looking for a story that speaks to their own situation.

They won't be entirely disappointed, either, until they reach the end of the book. Day's adventures in Toronto coalesce around her plans to earn enough money to fly back home to her mother, and young readers will be