

Sometimes the two are visually integrated into a unit such as "alexander the great was never late/ he ate all the veggies upon his plate" in which the text forms a plate on which rest a fork and knife. One cannot help but wonder again whether something special happens when author and illustrator are one and the same. Certainly this is a special book.

Baskwill's book, or is it Kaulbach's book, offers us both merit and problems. Perhaps for such a small book it attempts too much. The contents page lists thirteen themes, but none is represented by more than three poems, almost half by only two. The poems are written with assurance and skill in conventional rhymes, rhythms, stanzas. But one reads them with the feeling that this has already been said. "Open a book" says, much less originally, what Emily Dickinson said so well so long ago. The title poem says well what Eve Merriam said much more vividly in "How to eat a poem." The poems, though, are very well composed and will speak to a child. Teachers who sincerely want children to love poetry will find this a helpful book. The illustrator, working in scratch-board and ink, has provided at the bottom of every page visual hints for extension activities which children could do. Kaulbach's illustration does not stop here, though: she also provides large black pictures which are arresting, sharp, lively, and assured. But they are too much for the understated verse. The smaller illustrations at the bottoms of the pages might have been enough.

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#### THE MARGARET TRILOGY

**A place for Margaret.** Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1984. 151 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73665-5; **Margaret in the middle.** Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1986. 149 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73666-3; **Margaret on her way.** Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1988. 140 pp., \$4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73667-1.

The author of the delightful Booky stories returns to Depression-era Ontario to bring us five years in the life of another lively young heroine in the Margaret Trilogy. After positive TB test, eleven-year-old Margaret Emerson is sent for a restorative summer to the Shelburne area farm of her childless aunt and uncle. Circumstances



conspire to extend her stay and she settles into a rural school. She wins the devotion of the Clydesdale workhorse, Starr, a unifying strand in the three books. Aunt Marg, a compassionate woman of practical faith, guides the impetuous Margaret gently towards maturity while her sturdy, affectionate relationship with Uncle Herb, flavoured by their shared delight in jokes, eases Margaret's discontent at the lack of connection she feels with her own harried father. At the end of the first book a difficult choice must be made. Finally, assured of her parents' love and support, Margaret decides that on the farm she will find room to grow into the person she wants to be.

This generous-spirited and intelligent young woman is determined to channel her natural affinity for animals into a veterinary career. She wrestles convincingly with the jealousy that flares when her siblings' summer visits or the temporary addition to the farm family of an orphaned schoolmate threaten her with displacement. Hunter also touches feelingly on the issue of male prejudice. A reminder that women only got the vote in 1920 helps clarify for readers the societal backdrop against which the independent Margaret must battle, even against Aunt Marg who opposes Margaret's wearing overalls around the farm instead of a skirt.

The author, while setting her stories accurately in their period, and intriguing readers with references to horse-drawn delivery vans, "shinplasters," crystal radio sets, and cars that go 20 mph, also builds firm links between her 1920s character and present-day youth. Eaton's stores, a day at the Ex, a stay at the Hospital for Sick Children invite identification with Margaret's life, while her matter-of-fact acceptance of outdoor privvies and the absence of electricity on the farm nicely underlines differences.

Margaret shares the stage in these stories with the horse, Starr. Descriptions of his awesome size and strength, the sleek warm hide, the great kind eyes, the whickerings of excitement and snufflings of contentment ring true. When Margaret uses her secret signal to calm Starr in a burning barn or to exhort him to free himself from a snow-filled ditch, we are aware that these episodes are unlikely to reflect the norm in human-animal relationships but prepared to accept them as believable in the context Hunter creates between this particular girl and horse. The imagination is stretched, however, when Margaret sends Starr for help after breaking her leg or when she declares that she can turn the fifteen hundred pound horse during a bareback gallop by merely tweaking his ear. This is the stuff of romanticised animal fiction. Having said that, one must credit the author with knowing what appeals to juvenile (especially female) readers. What child is not entranced by the idea of winning the allegiance of an hitherto untameable beast? Margaret "magics" an ornery horse at the fair, and, with no training, successfully sews up a wounded fawn. Simplistic, certainly, but acceptable to the reader who still cherishes hope of being revealed in similarly effortless possession of a desired skill or talent.

The emotional range in all three Margaret novels is limited; melodrama looms during action highpoints. The language tends to be unenriched, sometimes trite ("a hearty breakfast"), and occasionally twee ("baby deer"). Though not always fully fleshed, Hunter's characters normally act from understandable motives. The teenaged Margaret's first-person narrative is often humorous and engaging and Hunter's overall style, though spare, is consistent, and accessible to readers from about age nine through to junior high.

Fans of Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books may be expected to take the Margaret trilogy to their hearts for their similar homespun simplicity, unequivocal morality, and warm family feeling, satisfying resolutions and quick dispatch of serious problems. Although without the depth of Montgomery's famous heroine, Margaret shares with spunky Anne her forthrightness, her sharply-honed sense of justice, and her desire to realize sometimes unsupported educational goals. Margaret, like Laura and Anne, is comfortingly portrayed as a girl who is bound to win through to happiness. Looking at the excellent photographic covers of this paperback reissue, one cannot help thinking what a wonderful television series the creators of the Avonlea programmes could make of Hunter's novels.

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#### RITE DE PASSAGE

**Le coeur en bataille.** Marie-Francine Hébert. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1990. 152 pp., broché. ISBN 2-89021-122-3.

*Le coeur en bataille* est le septième livre publié par Marie-Francine Hébert chez La courte échelle et fait partie de la collection Roman +. Ce texte, qui est destiné aux jeunes lecteurs à partir de treize ans, nous raconte la vie quotidienne – ordinaire, bien sûr, mais toujours très intéressante et mouvementée – de Léa, une jeune fille qui souffre toutes les douleurs associées aux rites de passage entre l'enfance et l'âge adulte.

Léa et son frère Max sont des adolescents tout à fait typiques. Leur mère est pédiatre; leur père est professeur. Mais la vie de Léa, au commencement du roman, n'est pas du tout heureuse. En effet, même les titres des chapitres indiquent clairement le chagrin de la jeune protagoniste et annoncent le voyage psychologique progressif qui débouchera finalement sur une attitude plus heureuse, plus indépendante, plus équilibrée: "Qui m'aime?", "La course contre la peine," "Si j'étais ma mère," "Touchez-moi, quelqu'un," "Papa, viens chercher ta fille!", "Un puits sans fond," "Le tunnel de lumière," "Sauve qui peut l'amour," et "Allô! c'est moi."