

# Some Essential Reference Books

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*Children's Literature: A Guide to Reference Sources. Second Supplement*, compiled by Virginia Haviland and Margaret N. Coughlan. Library of Congress, Washington, 1977. 413 pp. \$9.70 hardcover. (Obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.)

*Canadian Books for Young People*, 1980, edited by Irma McDonough. University of Toronto Press, 1980. 123 pp. \$15.00 paper. ISBN 0-8020-4594-4.

*Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature. Second Edition*, edited by Sheila Egoff, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley. Oxford University Press, 1980. 457 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-19-540309-6.

*The Child Celebrated in Illustration*, Peter Bennett. Penguin Books, 1979. Unpaged. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-1400-53948.

*Children's Literature: A Guide to Reference Sources* and its supplements form such a valuable bibliographical tool for scholars and teachers in the subject that I was astonished to find the original 1966 volume at a discard sale in our local public library recently. I hope that such an oversight is unusual. Librarians and teachers from primary school to university can find comprehensive and varied information in all three volumes, which are intended to describe "books, articles, and pamphlets selected on the basis of their estimated usefulness to adults concerned with the creation, reading, or study of children's books", as editor Virginia Haviland said in the preface to the *Guide*. This first volume covered a far longer time range than the more recent books, and thus referred to much historical material of interest to the serious scholar, as well as to the work of major critics in the area. The two supplements cover much shorter periods, from 1966 to 1972, and from 1972 to 1977. A third supplement is now in preparation.

The *Second Supplement*, my topic in this review, makes use of the same subject headings as the original guide, and considerably enlarges the areas entitled "International" and "National Studies", including for the first time a heading for French Canada. The Preface draws attention to the accelerated interest in children's books seen during recent years, and notes particularly the establishment of the

International Society for Research into Children's Literature, and of the scholarly journal *Phaedrus*. This widening interest is evident in the variety of historical and critical studies listed in the Supplement – works on chapbooks, on John Newbery, comments on social phenomena such as “gentry fiction”, a look at the “country boy” motif, an analysis of the black experience in children's books, and many others. Following useful historical sections on early magazines, collections, exhibitions, and publishing is an up-to-date listing of criticism including such writers as Marcus Crouch, Sheila Egoff, Margery Fisher, Selma Lane, and John Rowe Townsend. A section on authorship covers a wide range of studies of individual writers, including not only the expected list of works on such giants as Andersen and Carroll, but also reference to such scholarly articles as “The Good Witch of the West”, by Robert Scholes, who compares the allegory of Ursula Le Guin with that of C.S. Lewis. In the *Second Supplement*, as in the earlier volumes, we can also find out about illustrations, bibliography, teaching children's literature, and research, and about studies on early source material such as folk tales and nursery rhymes, in which area, of course, the names of Iona and Peter Opie appear more than once. It is heartening to see from this supplement the growing number of scholars who take the creative writers of children's books seriously. It is also fascinating to explore the international and national sections, to discover the wide geographical range of interest and the variety of subject matter in such places as Sweden (“Fran Snövit till Snobben – From Snowwhite to Snoopy”), the U.S.S.R. (“The Victory over Fascism”) or Nigeria (“A Manual for School Libraries on Small Budgets”). It was sad, on the other hand, to find that there was no mention of *CCL*. These references are, nonetheless, to books that no serious teacher of children's literature, and certainly no library, can afford to be without.

One item that the *Guide to Reference Sources* does not, by its nature, include is a list of the actual works at the centre of our study. Bibliographies of English and American creative material are readily available, and *Canadian Books for Young People* (1980) is informative in our national field of fictional and non-fictional writing. This volume is the third to be edited by Irma McDonough, following ones published in 1976 and 1978, and sets out to present an inclusive rather than exclusive list of books and magazines in print for children up to the age of fourteen, as well as short sections for professionals including reference works, information on relevant associations, and bookstores. The section on books for small children predictably covers picture books and folklore, giving the usual bibliographical details, a brief summary of the contents, and a suggestion about age range. The smaller presses predominate in the

picture-book area, in number though generally not in quality, with the Women's Educational Press presenting several tales of active girls such as *Mandy and the Flying Map*. It is heartening to note, among the numerous tales about kittens, ducks and mice, some greater challenges to the imagination such as Jacques de Roussan's *Au dela du soleil/Beyond the Sun* (Tundra, 1977), a bilingual picture book on space travel, or Muriel Whitaker's *Pernilla in the Perilous Forest* (Oberon, 1979), a journey back into the allegory of the Middle Ages. Folk tales are well represented, with native legends predominating, many presented by well-known white writers in the field such as Christie Harris, Kay Hill, or James Houston, but others by native writers such as Mary Lou Fox and Norval Morriseau. Familiar names in Maritime and French Canadian folklore, Helen Creighton and Edith Fowke are also listed, but non-Indian folk tales about the prairies and the west are absent. Moving up in age range, Irma McDonough next gives comprehensive lists of non-fiction books on the social sciences, science, the arts, sports and recreation, geography and travel, biography and history, and includes sections on reference books and publishers' series. To the teacher of children's literature, and to anyone who wants to read to children or encourage them to read creative works, the most interesting sections are those on language and literature, and on fiction. A somewhat arbitrary division is made here between poetry, drama, and writing by children on the one hand, and novels on the other. The list of works by children, mostly in anthology form, runs to an impressive eighteen volumes; it would make an interesting study to compare the subject-matter and approach of these stories and poems with those in the list which follows, covering fiction written by adults *for* children. In this list, a long one, it is a little sad to see how persistently the old Canadian themes repeat themselves, growing, I think, daily more out of touch with the reality of the modern child. Animal and survival tales are numerous. Some writers, particularly Lyn Cook, write stories set in more populated places, Sudbury or the Niagara Peninsula, but only a few authors, such as Jean Little, Marian Engel, and the talented teenager Gordon Korman, write about today's people in today's places. Particularly noticeable are the many books written by white writers about the adventures and distresses of Indian children (almost invariably boys). Some of these are excellent and authentic, notably the works by John Craig, James Houston, and Monica Hughes; but it is strange that in a society where native and non-native people so rarely meet each other, so many imaginary adventures set in the lost past should be produced. A valuable antidote in the classroom might be the use of the anthology *Native Sons*, listed here under "Poems", and written by young native prison inmates. "We speak because you need to understand." More encouraging is the next section on "Fantasy", which indicates how this important mode of writing has

increased during the 1970s, and the list of "Science Fiction", with Monica Hughes' novels predominating. *Canadian Books for Young People* will be a useful tool for teachers and librarians.

*Only Connect*, a collection of articles on children's literature edited by Sheila Egoff, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley, has made a constant appearance on my "Recommended Critical Reading" list since its first edition appeared in 1969. The second edition (1980) retains much of the valuable material of the first, but updates itself particularly in the area of "The Modern Scene". Of the other sections, the first, "Books and Children", concerns itself with the transmission of values. Roger Lancelyn Green considers the nineteenth century in this light, while other writers look at messages contained in historical fiction or modern problem tales. The "Fantasy" section is sizeable and unchanged, and its most classic essays are those by Tolkien ("On Fairy Tales") and C.S. Lewis ("Three Ways of Writing for Children"), while other contributors include Martin Gardner, Lillian Smith, and P.L. Travers, whose quotation from *Howards End* ("Only connect!") gave the editors their memorable title. The "Historical Fiction" heading of the 1969 edition has surprisingly disappeared, although an article "Combined Ops" by Rosemary Sutcliff has moved from there to the section "Some Writers and Their Books", which also contains informative essays on Andersen, Lang, Alcott, Twain, Grahame, and an enlivening view of Beatrix Potter by Graham Greene, an unlikely but engaging combination. This material is all useful, but I would like to have also seen some less available work on more contemporary authors, such as the Scholes article on C.S. Lewis and Ursula Le Guin listed in the *Guide to Reference Sources*. The following section on illustrators includes articles by Edward Ardizzone and Roger Duvoisin, as well as an interview with Maurice Sendak. The most striking change in the collection, however, comes in the last section, where all but one of the essays on "The Modern Scene" from the 1969 volume have been replaced. John Rowe Townsend, who in the 60's wrote about the healthy condition of British children's publishing in the areas of historical fiction, fantasy, and picture books, now tackles the divisive question of racist and sexist stereotyping. Patrick Merla notes how in the 70's an earlier trend has been reversed, and the adults are reading fantasy while the children opt for realism. John Goldthwaite, in "Notes on the children's booktrade: all is not well in tinsel town", comments on the flood of inferior work ("Kiddie confetti"), now on the market. Sheila Egoff writes powerfully about the modern problem novel, noting that its teenage protagonist is typically "laden with grievances, hostile to the adult world, rigorously self-centred", while parents are seen as "confused, inept, insecure, cynical, violent, sadistic". Her view of the changing world of children's fiction, of its loss of innocence and

movement towards a bleak seriousness, gives a sombre tone to the conclusion of this volume. She sees the seventies as "more suitably described as an iron age than a golden one".

After looking at so much material for or about children, it is a pleasure as well as an education to look at the child directly, in the survey of illustrations presented by Peter Bennett in *The Child Celebrated in Illustration*. This book would provide useful visual background to a Children's Literature course, showing, as Bennett says, "the blossoming of children and the imaginations that perceived them". The introduction speaks of the beginnings of the cult of childhood in the nineteenth century, the vision of the child as a symbol of innocence standing in contrast to the darkness of the new industrial age. The illustrations follow the changing view of the child, beginning in the fifteenth century when Dürer showed innocence residing only in heavenly beings or cherubs. In the centuries of didacticism that follow, the story and the picture are intended to keep children in their places, and boys and girls are seen with their clothes in flames, or falling from walls, or grieving over a dying mother, in illustrations from various moral texts. Blake is unique in his time in seeing the beauty of innocence and the tragedy of its inevitable loss, and his soft, unfocused figures contrast sharply with the wild and ugly pictures of the undisciplined children drawn by Heinrich Hoffman in *Struwwelpeter*. To most adults of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the perfect child was the well-behaved child, like Goody Two-Shoes, and life for adult or child was a serious business. One of the first signs of a changing attitude, however, appears in the illustrations of George Cruikshank, whose characters reproduced here are rotund and merry, whatever their age, and whose children dance and play and stuff themselves with buns. From this attitude it is an easy step to nonsense, in the long curling rose of a Lear character, or the frilly bonnet of Alice's pig-baby as Tenniel imagined it. With *Alice*, of course, comes the concept of the essential sanity of childhood innocence, compared with the hysterical frenzy of the adult world, and Bennett shows us how five different illustrators from different periods convey Alice's balance and wholeness in the midst of fragmentation. Innocence soon becomes associated with charm, as well as with a rural setting, especially in the paintings of Kate Greenaway and Randolph Caldecott in the 1870's and 1880's, but charm too easily becomes degraded into sentimentality in magazines like *Chatterbox* and *Little Folks*, with their curly-headed, large-eyed angels. Careful design and vivid colour gives richness to the pre-Raphaelite children of Walter Crane, in contrast to the rather pale and frightened characters glimpsed in a blend of light and shadow in Arthur Rackham's work. In the early twentieth century children start to become more human, and are seen fighting, or lying smoking in a

canoe, or listening at a keyhole. Variety is the keynote to the illustrations of twentieth century children, and there is often a move to simplicity, in, for example, the line drawings of Hugh Lofting or Garth Williams. The twentieth century also corrupts in its own style, by using the sales appeal of innocence in advertisements for soap or cream cake, but many illustrators add to our understanding of childhood by showing us their private visions, such as the dream forest of Maurice Sendak or the graceful and spontaneous seascape of Edward Ardizzone. It is a pleasure to see, at the end of the book and on the cover, a painting by Canadian illustrator Heather Cooper, which combines the untouched simplicity of the small child with the beauty and complexity of the child's daydreams. As a survey of children's illustrators, this book has limitations, since it cannot include, for example, Beatrice Potter, who rarely painted human figures; but the intention of the collection is to show us the changing concept of the child, and in this it succeeds well.

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## Amerindians in History

*OLIVE PATRICIA DICKASON*

*The Iron People*, Terry Leeder. Illus. by Deborah Drew-Brook. Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1979. 64 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-919670-35-0.

*Mistress Molly, the Brown Lady*, Helen Caister Robinson. Illus. Toronto and Charlottetown, Dundurn Press, 1980. 160 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-919670-49-0.

*Crowfoot*, Carlotta Hacker. Illus. Toronto, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977. 64 pp. \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-88902-238-0.

*Chief Joseph and his People*, William Rayner. Illus. Toronto, Collins, 1979 (first printed in Great Britain). 79 pp., \$15.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-00-195124-6.

*Tom Longboat*, Bruce Kidd. Illus. Toronto, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1980. 64 pp. \$2.75 paper. ISBN 0-88902-680-7.