

But divorced children are more than self-reliant; they are unselfish. These are kids who worry with intensity about their parents, their siblings and each other. Such caring is perhaps surprising in the wake of the "me decade," particularly in children who have had to sacrifice so much. Despite the almost universal and somewhat Panglossian assertion that the divorce was for the best, most children admitted to a permanent sense of loss. They deserve better, which is why these books were written.

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How to Make Friends with Reality

ROBERT MUNSCH

Good Times, Bad Times, Mummy and Me, Priscilla Galloway. Illus. by Lessa Calvert. The Women's Press, 1980. 32 pp. \$4.95 paper. ISBN 0-88961-066-5.

Sloan & Philamina, or, How to Make Friends with Your Lunch. Patti Stren. Clark Irwin & Co. 1979, 36 pp. \$8.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-525-39485-0.

I once worked for two years in a daycare centre taking care of a group of twenty children. Eighteen of them had working mothers who were either single or divorced. The mothers all had the same washed out look as a result of trying to cope with kids, jobs, laundry and life in general with too little time and not enough money. The children were all trying to meet their own needs for attention and affection from their very frazzled parents. Conflicts were common, especially since most of the children resented their mother's jobs.

When I read *Good Times, Bad Times, Mummy and Me*, I was struck that the mother in the story had the same very washed out look as the single parents I had worked with in daycare, and her child had exactly the same problems. The story deals with the inevitable stresses that single parent families get involved in, and it does this from the child's point of view. With the rise in divorce and unmarried mothers, this certainly is a timely book.

Happily, it is not only timely, but also a good story.

Priscilla Galloway has captured the anomalous feelings of a child about her working mother without being moralistic or pedantic. The text is simple, clear, easy to read out loud, and it lends itself to group participation (a real plus in group settings). Some people may be upset by the use of the word "hate" (as in "I hate my mummy"), but I found that children were not upset when I read it to them. Lessa Calvert's illustrations merge nicely with the emotional tone of the text.

The paperback format is sturdy enough for most needs and the full colour cover makes a good impression. All in all, it is a must for any child with a single or working parent and also an excellent resource for families in general (and no daycare centre should be without a copy).

The second book under review here takes a less direct approach to children's problems. Sloan is an anteater and Philamina an ant. They become friends and have to deal with problems of prejudice and racial stereotyping among their peer-group and relations. Clearly we have here the basis for a boring, preachy allegory, assuming that is, that the author is not Patti Stren of *Hug Me* fame. But the author *is* Patti Stren. She mixes hilarious dialogue, clear writing, and her own inimitable brand of illustrations into a marvellously appealing book for children from age 6 to adult.

Of course, *Sloan & Philamina* really is an allegory, but like all good allegories, it stands on its own as a good story. Since it functions well on two levels, it can be used as simple fun reading with kindergarten children or as part of a social studies class with an older group.

Patti Stren's illustrations deserve special mention. Her black and white line drawings almost constitute a second text (see figure 1). They are full of comments and asides and jokes. This very original approach somehow meshes very nicely with the text.

Although Patti is a Canadian writer, this book was co-published with a U.S. firm. Perhaps as a consequence, what overt cultural references there are in the volume are to the United States. These are



Figure 1.

not a vital part of the story and most of them are worked into the illustrations. For example, a dancing ant comments, "Ever since the E.R.A. you never let me lead" and on the last page of the book, a retired ant sits reading the *New York Times*. Now this is good business, since New York has more people than Canada, but buyers should beware that this excellent Canadian book chooses to have American cultural tidbits instead of Canadian cultural tidbits.

On the other hand, co-publishing has resulted in a *very* sturdy book which compares with usual Canadian efforts the way a Mercedes Benz compares to a Honda. Short of termites or three-year-old kids with scissors, this book will last a long time.

So all in all, *Sloan & Philamina* is an excellent book which can be either fun or serious, depending on the needs of the reader.

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