

comprendre l'enfant. Ils cherchent à lui enseigner quelque chose. Nul doute que Jeune Publics, en plus de procurer des heures de lecture agréables et instructives, contribuera à faire connaître le théâtre pour enfants et à créer des liens entre les troupes et leur public.

Louise Filteau travaille à la pige pour plusieurs revues de théâtre. Elle s'est occupée activement du 8e Festival de théâtre pour enfants et est membre du comité organisateur du 9e Festival.

Punctuation for the Primary Reader

SARAH VANDERBURGH

Blueberry Books, A Mini-Library for Primary Readers, Muriel and Ginette Grenier. Illus. by Claire Grenier-Kennair. Academic Press Canada, 1980. Translated and adapted from *La Naissance de Virgule*. Editions Etudes Vivantes, Montreal, 1980. Box of 10 books and teacher's guide. \$22.80 paper. ISBN 0-7747-1192-2.

The series, *Blueberry Books*, is subtitled *A Mini-Library for Primary Readers*. The idea of a set of small booklets, as the title suggests, to be used in the primary classroom, is an excellent one. This series, however, is disappointing in its failure to provide both simple story and sentence structure and simple vocabulary and ideas. This review will discuss the basic features of the books, the teacher's guide, the vocabulary, illustrations and format of the stories and the concept of punctuation as it is presented in the set of stories.

Blueberry Books is intended to provide a supplementary source of reading material for the primary pupil. It is neither a reader nor a picture book, but a boxed set of story booklets dealing with the same group of characters. Each of the ten booklets is short and contains a complete story. Each page has only a few sentences, making the booklets good sources of enrichment for children who are discouraged by long story books. The books feature blueberry characters named for punctuation marks – Comma, Mr. and Mrs. Parentheses, Period, Question, Ellipses and Apostrophe. They are imaginatively endowed with human personalities and physical characteristics. Their physical attributes also include the punctuation mark appropriate to their name. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Parentheses have legs shaped like parentheses, Comma has a comma for a nose and Question, the daughter, has question marks for nose and ears. The story plots, such as the first day of school, a bicycle ride, Halloween, Christmas and the garden are all subjects familiar to the young reader. Safety, mannerly behaviour and other important values are stressed in the stories.

A teacher's guide, containing many creative suggestions for use in the classroom, is included in the box. The ideas include sections on how to introduce each book, vocabulary work, story content, enrichment, punctuation and related activities such as science, health, art and music. The tasks suggested by the guide, however, are beyond the ability of the average primary pupil. The children who will be able to complete the activities will have to be more advanced than the children who will enjoy the length and structure of the stories. A great deal of guidance will be required to use the books successfully in the primary class. The teacher, of course, may choose to use the books without the related materials.

The vocabulary used in the booklets is also more difficult than that usually mastered by the primary reader. Such words as apostrophe, punctuation and ellipses are used. Generally a book of this length and story content will not appeal to a child who is able to comprehend the complicated vocabulary throughout.

The books are well illustrated in bold colours. The central character, Comma, has a pleasing face. His cartoon shape and simplicity of features will appeal to young readers. The background of the pictures is kept simple and undistracting. Unfortunately in a few of the books the words are printed in black on the dark background of an illustration which will give young children added difficulties at a time when they are learning new words and skills. In other places the words are printed in white and stand out quite clearly. In one book, the text describes the baby blueberry turning from white to red to blue, but the picture with the red phase shows a purple blueberry.

Primary children will find this discrepancy difficult to comprehend. In the series a picture of a blueberry bush is not shown. This is unfortunate both for the young reader and for any teacher or parents who are unfamiliar with the blueberry's natural environment.

Various forms are used for the story formats. The Christmas book is told in rhyming couplets and the one entitled *Holidays* has two speaking parts. The other books are written in short sentences.

The concept of punctuation for the primary reader is extremely complex and abstract. One of the booklets' purposes is to create an understanding of the uses of punctuation in the written language. Only the most advanced primary child, who has already mastered the basic sentence structure, will have the ability to grasp the meaning and use of the characters' names in the series. As previously stated, the story length and content suggest that the books are more suited to a less advanced reader.

Although the series, *Blueberry Books*, has many charming features, the authors have not chosen vocabulary or a concept suitable for primary children. The plot and the shortness of the booklets suggests suitability for a young group. However, the primary pupil will soon become frustrated with the difficulties encountered in reading and understanding the new words, in grasping the concept of punctuation and in completing the follow-up activities. A greater than normal amount of teacher preparation and guidance will be necessary to use the series successfully in the primary classroom.

Sarah VanderBurgh is a former primary school teacher. She is now the mother of two pre-school children in Toronto, Ontario.