

who sacrifices her only possession, her muslin curtains, so that her daughter can dance in the school's Maypole dance. The tale succeeds not because it is a tale of Polish immigrants, but because it is about the love that exists between all parents and their children. But this tale, unfortunately, is the exception. Attempts to be culturally significant doom most of the short stories to mediocrity.

But Ms. Andrews' collection also includes poetry, and here one can find little fault with her selections. Here — briefly, succinctly and wonderfully — she is able to suggest the variety of cultures which enrich the Canadian experience. Particularly noteworthy are the Caribbean poems of Cyril Dabydeen and the Inuit poems of Alootook Ipellie. Perhaps, however, it is Nancy Prasad's "You have two voices" which most fully enunciates the reason that the poetry succeeds while the stories do not.

Speak to me again in your mother tongue.
What does it matter how little I understand
when the words pour out like music
and your face glows like a flame.

In the poetry, we finally hear the mother tongue, unadulterated by the stereotypic motifs and forms which seem to define the traditional children's story. And only then can the words pour like music and the face glow like a flame.

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REMEMBERING

Child of the pioneers; stories, May Carmichael. Illus. Elsie Hadden Mole. Highway Book Shop, 1977. 80 pp. \$3.00 paper. ISBN 88954-109-4; *Time to blow out the lamp. . . and other stories*, Mary Cook. Illus. Iris Miller. Opus Mundi Canada, 1980, 138 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-920870-02-3.

"Tell me what it was like when you were little." This is a request as old as time itself, universally appealing, certainly not limited to the young. And, thank goodness, there are always the storytellers who are willing to share their store of experiences with us, as they give both continuity and a richer texture to our own lives. For the young, "remembering," however vicariously, contributes to a sense of where one is and has been. We in Canada, with such a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds, relish good stories of our roots which inform and enchant.

May Carmichael, in a charming series of vignettes (no more than three pages in length at maximum) first tells her young readers of early days in Glasgow, Scotland, just prior to her family's departure for Canada where they would "buy a bush farm in Northern Ontario, build [their] own little house and stable, then raise chickens and pigs, and cows and horses."

Written in the first person, the brief episodes allow the reader to share in the delight of a first visit to the seashore, the modest pleasures of a ride on the deck of a doubledecker bus, of a picnic in the country, of the discovery of gypsy caravans and kite flying. The total impression is one of joy in small pleasures, and the comfort of a closely knit family during time of crisis. The young reader becomes well aware of what Scotland has meant to the little girl, May, with its traditional customs and celebrations. Then she embarks on the *Athenia* and starts a new adventure: she explores the decks curiously, discovers animals aboard, and then takes pleasure in watching the adults dance on deck.

Life is not easy for the family whose "Dad came to Canada because he wanted to own his own home, wanted to be a farmer, and feel free." This is a story of lost jobs, disappointment at losing the first farm, and new beginnings with one bag of seed potatoes, one spade, one hen, and a sitting of eggs, and finally a farm purchased from government land. Carmichael remembers cold winters because her parents had difficulties keeping a wood fire going, and her brother remembers the wooden soles which kept his feet dry but himself embarrassed. May and her family find kind neighbours and good community spirit. There are the sleigh rides and the box socials as well as the fierce blizzards. For the little girl, it is a happy and cherished childhood in a time of hard work and simple pleasures.

The reader responds in the way of a child listening intently to a grandmother who relays her story with simplicity, always being careful to explain what the young child may not understand. These stories cry out to be read aloud with a Scottish accent; they require the drama to lift them to another dimension. The illustrations of Elsie Mole have a child-like quality which may appeal to the young.

Also telling the reader/listener "what it was like when . . ." is Mary Cook, one of the Ottawa Valley's well-known personalities and long time C.B.C. broadcaster. This time the writer shares childhood memories of growing up in the depression years in Renfrew County, Ontario. Unlike *Child of the pioneers*, the presentation and content is suited for a wider readership which would certainly include adults. Like Carmichael, Cook chooses the first person narrative to relate brief episodes in the life of one family during years which were difficult for parents but rich and happy for children who were really unaware of how bad the times were.

Time to blow out the lamp is a pleasure to read. The author writes well and with enough descriptive detail to allow the reader to savour the experiences.

And there is a wealth of information for any young person wanting authentic descriptions of life in the Ottawa Valley at that time. Characters shine out and are not only revealed but allowed to develop through the linked episodes.

The title episode provides a case in point. The family had a bedtime ritual which lasted throughout most of the depression years. When Mary, the youngest, showed the slightest bit of sleepiness, it was Mother's procedure to announce that it was time for bed for all. Emerson, the older brother, would become particularly annoyed, but discipline was firm. The lamp was brought from the kitchen cupboard and lit; then the little procession wended its way up the stairs amidst frightening shadows. The readers see the glowing lamp in the small metal holder at the top of the stairs as children wash and run for their flannelette nightclothing and bow on their knees on the braided mat for mother to hear their prayers before they snuggle cosily with cold feet in the feather ticking. There is talking, a little singing and then it is time to blow out the light. Customs, manners, family expectations blend beautifully to provide a total impression.

But that is only one story and there are many. One becomes attached to the characters as the real people they are: mother who is a little unique because she has spent eighteen years living in New York City before coming to the farm; mischievous cousin Ronny from Montreal who is always getting into scrapes; Marguerite, the *femme fatale* of the third grade; or Mrs. Bloomberg from the States who unfortunately suffers acute appendicitis and must spend Jewish New Year in Renfrew General Hospital to everyone's chagrin. Indeed the people enrich the hard times. Some good honest sentiment is exhibited in the story "A Christmas dream." Mary who knew she would never have the doll of her dreams in the window of the dime store in Renfrew, nevertheless liked to talk about it. And then the miracle occurred. It was hers on Christmas morning. Her delight knew no bounds until she noticed her mother's galoshes with patches on patches and knew where the money should have gone.

Whether read in small swatches or in one sitting, *Time to blow out the lamp* will please anyone who can enjoy journeying into the past. The fine pen and ink illustrations of Iris Miller are infrequent, but complement the text admirably. **Barbara Graham** is Learning Materials Consultant for the London Board of Education. She reviews for several periodicals and teaches Children's literature courses at the Faculty of Education, U.W.O.