

Rachel is a photographer and the style of *Nobody asked me* is reminiscent of a photo album in its minute observation and succinct description: Rachel lying in bed as though she was doing the dead man's float; her mother "clutching her purse in front of her, standing in her chipmunk pose," (p. 23); her father twitching his pant legs up before he crouches, people at the dance, "using their hands to catch the crumbling glaze of their doughnuts as they bit into them" (p. 119). The description of Rachel and Bosco digging up a giant clam is so clear and evocative that you start to feel grit under your fingernails. Detailed drawings of objects head each chapter and are a welcome touch in a young adult novel.

Bellingham uses a more wide-angled lens in her description of landscape, as befits the prairie. *Storm child* invites comparison with Jan Hudson's *Sweetgrass* in historical and geographical setting and in clarity and dignity of language.

Lorimer books have a tendency to hammer their message home a little too neatly. Writers as skillful as Bellingham and Brochmann could have trusted the power of their stories and edited out the preachier bits. But, this minor annoyance aside, both the books are significant examples of Canadian young adult fiction.

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## FROM CITY TO COUNTRY

**Sandy**, Nancy Freeman. Borealis Press, 1984. 95 pp. \$23.95, \$8.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-88887-886-9, 0-88887-888-5.

Nancy Freeman's *Sandy* is about achieving goals. When protagonist Sandy's grandfather suffers a stroke, she is given the opportunity to realize her secret wish "to run a farm." Sandy is, however, still a seventeen-year-old student, unprepared to face the world on her own. But Sandy's seriousness sufficiently impresses her father so that he too seizes the opportunity to pursue his own goal of writing a book. Thus the entire family moves to the farm for a year.

The novel dwells on the inevitable problems of city people adjusting to rural life, and on Sandy's expected periods of doubt, although always her "motivation and commitment" carry her through. Sandy's younger sister, Linda, is a different story, as she never really wants to leave Ottawa and the athletics which are so much a part of her life, although she does find a replacement for them in singing and acting in the local school production.

A strong feature of Freeman's novel is its treatment of the theme of ambition: she dwells on the importance of individual ambition, but she touches upon the way this ambition sometimes conflicts with the needs and desires of others. But, even so, the novel seems a bit too pat. Linda's excitement at being in the play is not nearly as convincing as her initial bitterness at having to move. The character of Sandy's mother is, moreover, far from satisfactory. She too easily sacrifices her career plans in a way hardly consistent with the liberated view that women are more than wives and mothers. That her one year leave of absence falls in with her company's plans seems contrived and unconvincing. References to her as a slender, attractive, youthful mother are simply gratuitous.

Even if the novel is written for adolescents, too much goes undeveloped. Paul, Sandy's friend, is more than a friend, but the romance never really goes anywhere, with unnatural fadeouts suggesting there is something wrong with physical closeness. There is also mention of Linda as a very "physical" person, the result of her involvement in athletics. That this is undeveloped is unfortunate, since physical change is a major part of adolescent life. Finally, the introduction of "Sandy's Shop" at the end of the novel, after she has really achieved her "secret" goal of running a sheep farm, is not integrated with the remainder of the plot and seems merely tacked on, although the enigmatic Aunt Sandy, now long dead, adds mystery to the novel, and Freeman demonstrates considerable talents in describing the Ontario countryside.

*Sandy* is a reasonably good piece of adolescent fiction, and teenagers will certainly read it, but one doubts that it will remain in their memories for long.

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## COMME IL VOUS PLAIRA

**Le complot**, Chrystine Brouillet. Illustré par Philippe Brochard. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1985. 91 pp. 5,95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-052-9.

*Le complot* de Chrystine Brouillet est attrayant à première vue. Ce roman-jeunesse, subdivisé en huit chapitres et parsemé d'illustration, a une apparence "aérée".

Les illustrations en noir et blanc de Philippe Brochard ont un caractère de "bande dessinée", ce qui va immanquablement plaire aux jeunes lecteurs. Quelques peu caricaturales, d'un humour léger, elles s'intègrent bien au texte tout en lui conférant une qualité de verve pétulante.