

MINI-REVIEWS

I HAVE TO SEE THIS!



Story • Richard Thompson Art • Eugenie Fernandes

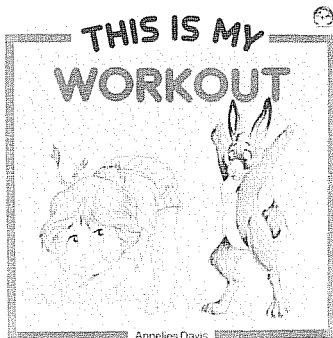
I have to see this!, Richard Thompson. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Annick Press, 1988. Unpag. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-015-4, 1-55037-014-6.

This charming book will hold particular appeal for preschoolers although five and six year olds may also appreciate the plot.

While perched on her father's shoulders on a cold winter's walk through the night, Jesse relates what she can see to her dad. Her astounding account of the Moon Family intrigues her father so much that he wants to share in the vision.

The make-believe world of Jesse is so close to young preschooler hearts that they will laugh at and appreciate Jesses' dad's attempts to join in the fun. In addition, children at this age are naturally interested in space.

The details in Eugenie Fernandes' art will not be missed by the children. Her furred and feathered creatures are ones young children can recognize and will enjoy discovering on their own. *I have to see this!* is a successful collaborative effort.



Annelies Davis

This is my garden, Annelies Davis. Illus. author. Hayes Publishing, 1987. Unpag. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88625-140-0; **This is my playworld**, Annelies Davis. Illus. author. Hayes Publishing, 1987. Unpag. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88625-141-9; **This is my workout**, Annelies Davis. Illus. author. Hayes Publishing, 1987. Unpag. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88625-140-0; **This is my pet**, Annelies Davis. Illus. author. Hayes Publishing,

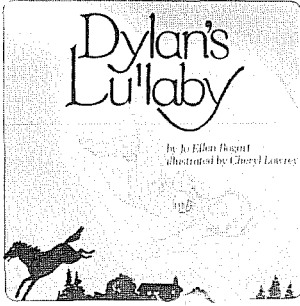
1987. Unpag. \$3.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88625-139-7.

Three of the board books in this series are identification books dealing with pets, toys, and objects found in the backyard or garden. The last one is called a "Workout" book.

The drawings may appeal to very young children although the items illustrated are limited in scope. The "Playworld" book includes a soccer ball, a bowling ball and a baseball bat, but trucks and dolls are nowhere in sight. In this same book a child is shown unravelling a roll of toilet paper, rather danger-

ously suggestive. In *This is my garden*, a child is seen playing with a lawnmower, even less desirable.

The "Workout" book seems to fulfil no real purpose but *This is my pet* clearly sets out to inform. These books have some visual appeal but should be discussed carefully with a toddler.



Dylan's lullaby, Jo Ellen Bogart. Illus. Cheryl Lowrey. Annick Press, 1988. Unpag. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-003-0, 1-55037-002-2.

Where do we go when we fall asleep? Like Eugene Field in his poem *Wynken, Blynken and Nod*, Jo Ellen Bogart describes the voyage of the child through the night sky. The story's rhythm moves along more or less successfully with the events of the

dream.

Dylan meets a flock of birds, runs down a silver road with a horse, comes across the "Face in the sky", and enters a sky pool for the fishes. Having a lullaby pull Dylan from one adventure to the next is an original idea, but a rather abstract one for a young child to grasp.

As Dylan's dream unwinds we discover inevitably that adults are rarely able to visit the sky. Presumably they have forgotten how to dream in the way children do. The book finishes on this note and leaves us with an unresolved, unsatisfying ending.

Although *Dylan's lullaby* will stir the child's imagination, the dialogue has a superficial quality that detracts from our enjoyment of the story. Cheryl Lowrey's simple illustrations match the story line but lack in visual appeal.

Dylan's lullaby is suitable for early primary children.



The swine snafu, John Bianchi. Illus. author. Firefly Books, 1988. Unpag. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-921285, 0-92185-12-4.

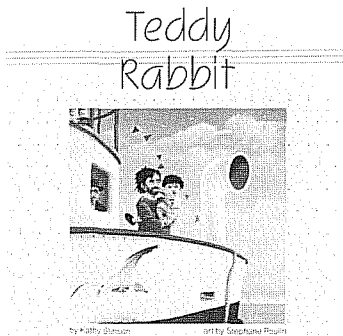
In his new book, John Bianchi takes a humorous look at a different set of neighbours – the Pigs and the Boars. Different lifestyles lead to hostility between the fami-

lies.

The "Snafu" (an acronym for "situation, normal, all fouled up") occurs when Wild Flora Boar and Mrs. Pig give birth to their "babies" on the same day in the same hospital. As the children grow up, there appears to have been a mix-up. Mrs. Pig's suspicions are confirmed when her children grow tusks. As it turns out there is no mistake, the tusks are simply crooked teeth. Mrs. Pig must learn to accept that her children are different.

The concepts that individual differences can be mutually beneficial and that people are often prejudiced by appearances are important ones to discuss with children. The implication in *Swine snafu* is that you cannot avoid people with differences so you should learn to live with them. Who knows, you may actually enjoy yourself!

Swine snafu loses some of its credibility due to its choice of "characters". Boars are uncastrated male pigs. Apart from this detail, this wonderfully illustrated book is recommended for five to eight year olds.



Teddy Rabbit, Kathy Stinson. Illus. Stéphane Poulin. Annick Press, 1988. Unpag. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-017-0, 1-55037-016-2.

Most of us can remember only too vividly that sinking sensation we experienced upon discovering we had lost or misplaced a favourite possession. It added to our misery to know that some belongings can never be replaced.

Picture a child on his way to a Teddy Bear picnic on Toronto Centre Island who drops his cherished "Teddy Rabbit" on the subway tracks. Few of us could fail to be moved by the child's plight, especially those of us who know of the attachments children form for particular toys.

Kathy Stinson's *Teddy Rabbit* is a moving new children's book. The plot moves at a good pace to a satisfying conclusion. Stéphane Poulin, the young illustrator of this book, captures both the human theme and the essence of Toronto in his drawings.

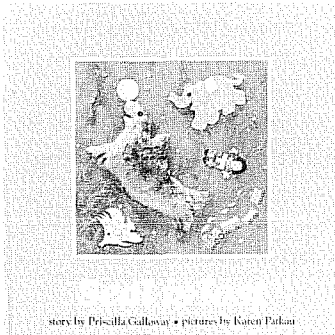
Most of us who work with small children eagerly await new books from Kathy Stinson. In *Teddy Rabbit* her collaboration with Stéphane Poulin adds a new dimension to her work. This book would be an excellent addition to any young child's collection. It is recommended for preschoolers and kindergarten children.

Anna, Paul and Tommycat say hello, Nicole Girard and Pol Danheux. Trans. by Priscilla Galloway. Illus. Michel Bisson. James Lorimer, 1987. 24pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-031-7; **Looking for Tommycat**, Nicole Girard and Pol Danheux. Adapted by Priscilla Galloway. Illus. Michel Bisson. James Lorimer, 1987. 24pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 1-55028-033-3.

These two books adapted from the French by Priscilla Galloway have big easy-to-read print suitable for young readers. The print generally complements its matching illustration but the correspondance is not always perfectly clear. These books would be challenging for a beginning reader due to some difficult vocabulary.

Michel Bisson's illustrations are bright and visually appealing. The humour in the script and in the drawings will be appreciated by most children. The personality of the mischievous Tommycat will appeal to a wide readership.

In *Looking for Tommycat*, the authors have introduced vocabulary based on a common theme. For example, related to the theme of Community Services, we have: the gas station, the corner store, the barber shop, the laundromat, the bookstore and the supermarket. There is also a commentary on Safety rules. This characteristic makes these books suitable as a pedagogical tool in addition to their value as books of general interest.



Seal is lost, Priscilla Galloway. Illus. Karen Patkau. Annick Press, 1988. Unpag. \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-019-7, 1-55037-018-9.

Priscilla Galloway offers comfort and reassurance to an anguished child who has permanently lost a favourite toy. *Seal is lost* is a story about Hugh, a little boy who has lost

his precious "seal".

The writer conjures up "Lost Toyland", a fun place where misplaced toys get together for company and play. The human qualities taken on by the toys will be appreciated by young children who perceive their toys as being real.

The gently introduced possibility of finding something to replace what was lost offers a therapeutic solution to a very real problem. Large, easily legible print will encourage those children eager to follow along.

Karen Patkau's illustrations are both colourful and interesting, if slightly sophisticated for young children. The pictures do not quite achieve the in-

tended three-dimensional effect. Fascinating use is made of texture with the result that one is tempted to touch the page to see if it is real.

Seal is lost will have special appeal for preschoolers and kindergarten children.

Flights of Magic, John Steffler. Illus. Shawn Steffler. Porcupine Books, 1987. 48pp \$12.95, cloth. ISBN 0-88878-265-9.

This is a rather confusing account of the trauma a child faces when moving. John Steffler merges fantasy and fact in this tale about Ruth, a little girl whose family has just moved to a new house. As a "house warming", Ruth receives a new book (called *Flights of magic*) from an uncle. Ruth reads the book to the exclusion of all else to the extent that her parents start to worry about her.

When Ruth's book is stolen by a thief in the unlikely form of a parrot, Ruth goes after him. Now begins the fantasy. Ruth's favourite character in the book is Princess Vidensa. In her search for her book, Ruth experiences adventures of the "Princess Vidensa" variety. The end result of her far-fetched exploits is that Ruth recovers her stolen book which she then proceeds to give away to another little "shy-looking" girl. The assumption is that she no longer requires the crutch the book provided.

Flights of magic contains many fascinating elements but they do not all tie together. In the end we are not really sure if Ruth has undergone a transition at all despite the fact she can give away her book. Her adventures do not seem in any way the sort that would lead her to accept a new home more easily. The book does not have a purpose even though the introduction leads the reader to expect one.

The colourful drawings by Shawn Steffler are interesting but unfortunately do not save *Flights of magic* from its feeling of disjointedness.

Charlotte Waterston who has taught primary classes for six years in London, Ontario, is now in the Master of Education program at McGill University, Montreal.