

Le monstre en Méli disparaît non pas parce qu'elle a grandi, même si certaines de ses paroles peuvent le laisser croire, mais parce qu'elle a étanché sa haineuse colère grâce à une série de petites combines rationalisantes. Qui veut noyer son chien, et ce texte le démontre une fois de plus, ne l'accuse-t-il pas de la rage? Je suis sûr que bon nombre d'enfants éprouveront un plaisir presque morbide à lire ce roman. Non pas parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas ressentir les sentiments de peine, de colère et de frustration, ils le peuvent et vont le faire, mais parce que ce texte leur procure une occasion de se libérer de ces émotions d'une manière qu'ils savent tout à fait inacceptable dans la réalité.

Ma réaction à ce roman est viscérale et plusieurs m'accuseront sans doute d'agir aussi méchamment que Mademoiselle Méli dans ce compte rendu. Et peut-être bien qu'ils ont raison. Quoi qu'il en soit, je ne pouvais taire mon honnête perception. Car j'ai vu ici sous le couvert de la fantaisie, du jeu, de l'abandon et de la légèreté une histoire qui fait très peu pour faire grandir et beaucoup pour exploiter le monstre en chacun de nous. Qu'on se le dise, le roman noir existe aussi bien pour les enfants que pour les adultes, à la différence que la couverture est colorée, le ton avenant, l'écriture babillarde, le sujet apparemment inoffensif, mais l'expérience de lecture demeure, elle, tout aussi pernicieuse.

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STORIES OF TODAY AND YESTERYEAR

Five days of the ghost. William Bell. Stoddart, 1989. 196 pp. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7737-2267-X; **Along the shore: Tales by the sea** L.M. Montgomery. Edited Rea Wilmshurst. McClelland and Stewart, 1989. 302 pp., \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-6158-7.

I remember when ghost stories were things to scare yourself silly with and contained nothing more substantial than the roasted marshmallows that accompanied them. In his most recent offering of fiction for young adults, William Bell creates a ghost story that is nicely enmeshed in all the intellectual and emotional trappings of contemporary life.

The central protagonist, Karen Stone, suffers from migraine headaches. Her brother, John, is an expert at all the latest technological whiz kid gadgets. Their friend, Weird Noah Webster, sports a partially shaved head and an Eat-the-Rich T-shirt. Even her parents are unmistakably up-to-date. Her father, a cartoonist, stays home while her mother, a radiologist, goes off to work.

The plot, which revolves around the children's relationship with the ghost of a local Indian chief, manages to skillfully weave together several important themes including the value of Native culture, the hypocrisy of some organized religions, the identity we achieve through understanding history, and most significantly, the necessity to confront and work through grief. Karen's twin brother has been killed in a skateboarding accident two years earlier and the core of the novel traces the unusual way that she is finally able to come to terms with his death.

Five days of the ghost is an exciting, insightful and affirming book. It even evokes bouts of goose-bumpy tingles many of us remember from those other, much less sophisticated tales of ghosts.

The current literary fad among North American preteen readers is an ongoing series of stories collectively titled *The babysitters' club*. The lives of the girls depicted in these stories have a very contemporary quality to them. All the details of current suburban lifestyles, right down to the pressures of coping with single-parented and blended families, are realistically presented.

Anyone trying to introduce the young devotees of *The babysitters' club* to the pleasures to be found in the seemingly distant world depicted in *Along the shore* might feel stunned by the task. After all, the adventures of the young protagonists in these turn-of-the-century stories are quite remote from the lives of children today, even those who are growing up in rural environments.

Children who are able to bridge that gap will be rewarded by encountering a world that has as many familiar concerns as it does strange ones. L.M. Montgomery's plucky characters, with their courage, determination and hard work in the face of daunting physical and emotional challenges, will appeal to everyone who yearns for a world where virtuous behaviour leads to success. That these characters are fairly one-dimensional might bother young readers less than adult readers.

Young readers will probably also be intrigued by the different sets of social conventions which govern the lives of Montgomery's characters. Children who have been irked by their curfews might be astounded by the restrictions placed, for example, on Marguerite Forrester in "A sandshore wooing." Forbidden by her severely repressive aunt and guardian from any contact with eligible males, she must conduct a promising romance with the help of sign language and spyglasses. In "Fair exchange and no robbery," although the two engaged couples gradually realize they are attracted to different people, the appropriate recoupling only occurs after a chance overheard conversation. After all, an obligation is an obligation. Other surprising social practices in both "The magic bond of the sea" and "A soul that was not at home" involve wealthy people who are allowed to take away children from their existing attachments. Everyone involved seems to understand that providing children with greater material opportunities is of paramount importance.

Besides being surprised by the social conventions of the time, some readers

might find Montgomery's flowery language unusual in these days of terse prose. Some might find many of her descriptions excessive. Take her account of Magdalen Crawford in "A strayed allegiance": "The heavy masses of her hair, a shining auburn dashed with golden foam, were coiled in a rich, glossy knot at the back of the classically modelled head and rippled back from a low brow whose waxen fairness even the breezes of the ocean had spared."

This latest collection of L.M. Montgomery's stories, which are being carefully selected and edited by Rea Wilmshurst, are a useful addition to the work available by this very special Canadian writer. The sixteen tales are a wonderful, although of course romanticized, celebration of Prince Edward Island people and the seascape which she loved so much.

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CREATIVE WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM

Write now! The right way to write a story. Karleen Bradford. Scholastic-TAB Publications, 1988. 64pp., \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-73175-0.

"Write a short story. For next Monday."

For many children, Karleen Bradford's book opens almost like a horror story. This assignment, to write a story given by an imaginary teacher, fills them with dread. Yet Bradford goes on to reassure her young readers that "it's *not* all that hard" and leads them step-by-step through the writing process. Beginning with how and where to find ideas, she shows how to create conflict, develop characters, set the scene and finally end the story. She also discusses the whys and why nots of outlining and suggests ways to overcome the curse of all writers: writer's block.

Write now! is written in an easy-to-read, conversational style. Bradford illustrates each step in the writing process, clearly and concretely, by developing several sample plots. These story lines are simple, realistic, sometimes funny, and always meaningful to the reader (for example, what if you have a fight with your best friend, or you get stuck babysitting an absolutely rotten kid?) Bradford leaves no doubt that stories can be written from the everyday happenings in the reader's life.

Bradford transforms an overwhelming task to a manageable, if not simple, exercise, and she does it with understanding and humour. Most importantly, she speaks to her readers as fellow-writers. She uses numerous examples from